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"THIS TRICK IS MINE, I THINK!" THE DETECTIVE CRIED.

OR,

The Dandy Conspirator.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,
AUTHOR OF "JOE PHENIX, THE POLICE SPY,"
"THE WOLVES OF NEW YORK," "THE
FRESH OF 'FRISCO," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

STRICKEN IN THE NIGHT.

JOE PHENIX, the renowned detective, sat in his office, which was in the heart of the famous Wall street district, New York City's great money center.

The hands of the clock pointed to the hour of one.

The detective had been out for an early lunch, and now, seated by the open window, gazing down upon the crowd of people hurrying along in the street below, was enjoying an after-lunch cigar.

Tony Western, Joe Phenix's confidential clerk, sat at his desk, examining various legal-looking documents.

"Do you find anything, Tony, requiring attention?" the detective asked.

"No, nothing, sir," the assistant replied, coming to the end of the papers as he spoke. "We seem to have cleared the docket."

"Well, it was my impression that we had finished up everything."

"It is strange," the other observed, thoughtfully. "I thought there was one or two things that we hadn't got through with."

"Oh, I know that there are a couple of cases, but matters are in such a shape that it is not possible for anybody to do anything with them."

"Those are the ones you have marked N. G.?"

"Yes, the men have got out of the way, and the parties who put me on the scent are not willing to go on. They think they have spent money enough, and to spend more would only be throwing good money after bad, so they are content to let the matter drop. They are private cases in which the public take no interest, and as there isn't any reward offered for the capture of the men I cannot afford to bother my head about them."

Those readers who have followed the fortunes of Joe Phenix as related in the novels of which he has been the hero, understand his position, and to those who now meet him for the first time we will say that after winning a great reputation as one of the detectives on the regular police force of the City of New York, Joe Phenix had retired from public life and opened a private detective office, and now nearly all his business came from the money kings whose neighbor he was.

"I have been planning to go off for a little vacation for quite a while but something has always turned up to detain me; now though I think I will be able to go."

Just as he made this announcement a newsboy came yelling along in the street below:

"Ere's yer extry—sudden death o' a millionaire—Old Abe's gone!"

"Hello, what's that?" exclaimed the detective as he leaned out of the window, uncertain as to whether he had heard aright.

As it happened this particular vender's voice was not so much like a fog-born as the majority of his class, whose utterances are usually so thick that not a quarter of what they say can be understood.

Again the words came so distinctly to the ears of the detective that he was satisfied he had heard rightly.

"Sudden death of a millionaire—Old Abe gone," is what the fellow is crying," Tony Western remarked, having advanced to the window.

"Yes, that is what I thought he said," Joe Phenix observed. "Can it be possible that it is Englebert? He is the only Old Abe I know of who is a millionaire."

"He is a noted man and his death would be apt to create a commotion."

"Yes, it would be likely to produce a flurry in the stock market for he is one of the leading operators," Joe Phenix declared. "Suppose you run down and get a paper, Tony, for if it is Englebert I should like to learn the particulars."

"All right!"

Western caught up his hat and departed, while Joe Phenix fell to musing over the circumstance.

Only three months before he had been acting for the millionaire, as the readers of the novel entitled "Joe Phenix's Silent Six," understand full well.

At that time the millionaire seemed to be in perfect health, and although he was a man well advanced in life yet he ought to have been good for ten or twenty more years.

"Life is a very uncertain thing though," the detective mused. "And Death is a reckless archer, and sometimes seems to take pleasure in striking down men whom everybody supposed to be good for a ripe old age."

In a few minutes Tony Western returned, a newspaper in his hand.

"It is Englebert, sure enough!" he exclaimed, as he entered the room.

"His death must have been very sudden for I was speaking with him yesterday, and he appeared to be in perfect health."

"There is a mystery about the affair, listen!" Tony Western said, and then he read the newspaper article, which ran as follows:

"SUICIDE OR MURDER!"

"Abraham Englebert, the Old Abe of Wall street, found dead. Did he die by his own act or by the hand of an assassin? This morning Abraham Englebert, a millionaire ten times over, one of the greatest stock operators that the New York market has ever known, was found dead in his bed.

"Mr. Englebert was very regular in his habits and, as a rule, rose usually at eight o'clock. This morning his valet, who is an intelligent colored man, Jonathan Edwards by name, knocked at his door at eight o'clock, as has been his custom. There being no response he came to the conclusion that his master desired to sleep a little later than usual, so he went away for twenty minutes, then he came again, and as there was no answer, he began to think that something must be wrong, and consulted the family, consisting of Mr. Englebert's son and daughter; after a consultation they came to the opinion that the door had better be forced, and when this was done Mr. Englebert was found lying dead in his bed, and as the body was perfectly cold it was apparent that death had come some hours before.

"As it happened Mr. Englebert had his own physician in the house, Doctor Mairstone, who had been summoned at the time of forcing the door, and by this gentleman's advice the police were called in, for after an examination of the body the doctor announced that he believed there had been foul play.

"But when the detectives from Headquarters made a careful examination of the apartment they found a small vial under the bed which bore the red danger signal of the skull and cross-bones. It had contained morphine, for some drops of the deadly poison were still in it and this fact gives rise to the supposition that the millionaire committed suicide, although there is no apparent motive for such an act on his part.

"P. S. A wild rumor is abroad as we go to press that Englebert was in monetary difficulties, and a panic in Wall street is predicted."

"Which must be taken with a grain of salt!" the detective remarked, dryly, as Tony Western came to the end of the account.

"Well, these newspaper men are always anxious for a sensation, you know, and in this case the wish is evidently father to the thought."

"Of course the news of Englebert's death was known on the street by the time the exchange opened, and if he was in difficulty and his sudden taking off would produce a panic, the thing would have been in operation long before now; then there would have been an excited multitude in the street, for news of that kind spreads rapidly, the very birds in the air seemed to carry it, but as far as I have observed there hasn't been any excitement."

"None at all," Tony Western observed. "I was speaking about that matter with young Charley De Smythe, who is on the first floor; he is a stock-broker, and had just come from the exchange as I bought the paper. I glanced over the article, saw the notice in regard to the panic, so asked him if the death of Englebert was known, and if it had produced any excitement."

"Rats!" he exclaimed, "these newspaper fellows make me tired once in a while! Of course the death was known; we brokers are not asleep, and some fools were unwise enough to think they could jump on Englebert's stocks and break the market; and, in the first flurry, they did manage to hammer things down a couple of points, but as to Englebert's being broke that is all in my eye and Betty Martin! To my certain knowledge there was no stronger man on the street than he was at the close of yesterday's business, and I don't believe he has a share of stock in his possession which would not sell for as much money as he gave for it. Besides there are too many big men under the market now to let the bottom drop out, unless some gigantic operator made the biggest kind of a slump, but these newspaper men always go off at half-cock."

"Yes, it is astonishing that these news-gatherers pay any attention to these idle rumors," Joe Phenix remarked. "Still, I suppose they take everything that comes; publish a report one day so as to be able to deny it the next, and that is what in the parlance of the day is called enterprise."

"But it is the sheerest kind of folly to talk about a man like Englebert being in difficulties," Tony Western declared.

"You are right, for when it came to operating in the stock market he was like the gambler who plays with marked cards and loaded dice," Joe Phenix remarked. "What chances did the ordinary speculator stand when he put his judgment against that of the man who was powerful enough to make stocks go up or down as he wished? He was playing a sure thing, and couldn't help winning nine times out of ten!"

"What do you think of this business? Why should a man like Englebert commit suicide?"

"He didn't," Joe Phenix replied, in his quiet yet positive way. "Tony, I have an idea that I am not going to take that vacation yet awhile. I think this mysterious death of the old millionaire will make some business for me."

CHAPTER II.

JOE PHENIX IS "RETAINED."

HARDLY had the words left his mouth, when a big, pompous-looking man bustled into the room.

He was a man of fifty, elaborately dressed in the finest of clothes, wore handsome jewelry, and plenty of it, had a fat face with a big, double chin, ornamented by enormous mutton-chop whiskers in the English style.

"Aha! this is Mr. Phenix, the detective, I believe?" and he promptly helped himself to a chair as he spoke. "You know me, I presume? Almost everybody does: General George Washington Miggs, president of the Everlasting Life Insurance Company, one of the few solid concerns in America, by gad!"

"I think I have had the pleasure of seeing you, general," the detective replied.

"Can you give me five minutes in private, Phenix? Important business—money in your pocket—deuce of a hurry, you know! My company is just rushed with business—doing more than all the rest of 'em put together—wrote a million dollars' worth of policies last week, and still they come a-rolling in!" and the general

took out his white silk handkerchief and flourished it in the air.

Tony Western had been quick to take the hint and had retreated to the inner office before the visitor finished his speech.

"Go ahead, general; speak freely."

"What! before that young man?" and the general looked around. "Bless me! he has got out, hasn't he? Well, Phenix, it is about this infernal Englebert business—you have heard of his death, I suppose?"

"Yes, I just read the account of it."

"Smart man, by Jove! I admit it, though I hate to—there are not many men in the world who can take me into camp to the tune of fifty thousand dollars, but this old rascal has done it!" exclaimed the visitor in an excited way.

"How is that?"

"Got me to write him a policy for fifty thousand dollars last week, and now he goes and shuffles off his cursed mortal coil this!"

Strikes us for fifty thousand dollars, mind you! on one premium! And I was ass enough to think that I had made a big capture and tooted my blessed horn all over this town, and now my envious imitators—I will not say rivals, for the great Everlasting Life Insurance Company has none—we are first, the rest nowhere—the fellows are making mouths at me! I tell you, Phenix, it is a deliberate swindle on the part of Old Abe! He has committed suicide on purpose to beat us out of fifty thousand dollars, but we will not pay it. We have a clause in our policies which bars out suicides. No man is going to gobble up our money simply by taking his own worthless life!"

"Well, I should not imagine that many men would care to try a thing of that kind," the detective remarked.

"Phenix, my dear fellow, there are plenty of men in the world who will do almost anything to get money, and I am satisfied that Old Abe has played the rascal!"

"I have been after him for ten years to go into our unrivaled company, but he wouldn't have it until now! One week, the insurance—the next week, the death! But I will be hanged if we will pay a single red cent!" blustered the big man, looking extremely fierce.

"You will resist payment on the suicide clause?"

"That is our little game, and we will win every time, and don't you forget it!"

"Phenix, it is the worst swindle that I have come across in all my business experience, and I don't doubt that the old schemer chuckled in his dying moments when he thought how neatly he was going to beat the colossal Everlasting Life Insurance Company out of fifty thousand ducats!"

"What do you want me to do?"

"Examine into the case so as to be able to prove to the satisfaction of a judge and jury that Englebert killed himself on purpose to swindle us out of this money!" the general announced.

"I retain you, you understand? I know that you are a good man, and I want you to go in and do your level best for us."

"There is a donkey of a doctor in the house—I went up there, you understand, the moment I heard that the man was dead."

The detective nodded.

"Well, this nobody of a doctor—Englebert's lackey, whom he kept in the house—Pumicestone, or Rottenstone, or some other kind of a stone, hang me if I remember! But that is neither here nor there, the name of the idiot!"

"Not the slightest consequence."

"Well, sir, this nobody has the impudence to assert that it is his opinion that Old Abe did not commit suicide!"

"Is it possible?"

"It is. The idiot comes out boldly and declares that it is his belief that the old man was murdered!" and the general fairly shouted out the words in his excitement.

"I tell you, Phenix, that Mucklestone will bear watching," the other declared. "He is a Scotchman, I think. Everybody knows that Scotchmen are the very devil after money. It is likely that he is in the plot, and is going to get a share of the fifty thousand dollars."

"Possibly," Joe Phenix observed, with the idea of humoring the excited old man.

"I do not think there is a doubt of it. It is so absurd! The idea of any one disputing that the man committed suicide, when a bottle with a few drops of morphine in it was found under the bed, just where it had evidently dropped from the man's hand after he took the fatal dose, and it was labeled morphine, too."

"And bore the name of the druggist from whom it was purchased, of course," Joe Phenix remarked, carelessly.

"Well—no," the general replied, slowly. "That part of the label is torn off, but that is not material, you know."

"I suppose not," the detective remarked in a rather evasive way. "But how comes it that in the face of such proof that Englebert took his own life, this doctor believes that there has been foul play?"

"I don't know; the idiot refused to say, although I pressed him for an explanation. All that I could get out of him was, that at the in-

quest he would present proof which would satisfy anybody that the man did not commit suicide."

"That is a pretty strong statement," the detective remarked in a reflective way.

"Strong! Well, yes, I should say it was!" the general almost howled.

"We had trouble, Phenix, almost immediately, that cursed doctor and a gentleman about my size! I am not a man to allow myself to be bulldozed, I can tell you, and I gave the fellow a bit of my mind, and he talked back too, would you believe it? this nobody of a doctor talked back to a man like me—a man with a national reputation—one of the solid men of the country!"

"Some of these Scotchmen are inclined to be very obstinate."

"Obstinate! a mule is a fool to this man!" the general declared. "He absolutely refused to give me any information. 'You will have to wait until the inquest, sir,' he said in his devilish curt way, and I lost my temper, although I seldom allow anything to ruffle me!" the insurance man declared, now almost purple in the face with excitement.

"I told him plainly that I thought there was a scheme on foot to bleed the great Everlasting Life Assurance Company out of fifty thousand dollars and that he had better be careful what steps he took or he might find himself in jail the first thing he knew!"

"And what did he say to that?"

"Laughed in my face in a deuced insolent way and told me I had better be careful what I said, for there was a libel law in New York, and if I was not careful I might find myself in jail!"

"He showed fight?"

"Yes, and then my indignation overpowered me and I came away, for fear I might forget myself and do the man an injury!" And the general threw out his chest and assumed the air of a "bad man" to perfection.

"I went straight to the superintendent of police; he is an old friend of mine, and I told him just what I thought of this ass of a doctor."

"Had his men discovered anything?"

"Well, my dear Phenix, you know that it is a difficult matter to get these detectives to ever say much of anything. Mystery is a part of their trade, you see, meaning no reflections upon yourself, you know."

"Oh, that is all right. I am not thin-skinned," Joe Phenix remarked with a smile.

"He admitted though that it was his impression that nothing new had been discovered—that I was acquainted with all the facts that had come to light."

"What do the family think about the matter—Mr. Englebert's son and daughter?"

"Well, I did not see the young lady, for she is prostrated by the shock, but the young gentleman, Maurice, thinks that it is a suicide, although he declared he did not know why his father should do anything of the kind, for there wasn't any cause as far as he knew, and when I hinted that there was a report his father was in difficulties and he might have killed himself because he knew he could not meet his obligations he promptly declared the rumor to be a lie, and asserted that his father was worth from ten to twenty millions."

"I think that is the truth, for I have been told that his death had not produced any flurry in the market, as would undoubtedly have been the case if his affairs were in a bad way."

"Ah, yes, but you cannot always tell about these speculators," the general declared in a very knowing way. "He may be in a ring, you know, with deuced strong backing, and the rest of the fellows are holding the market up so they can have a chance to get out, and when that is accomplished then there will be a grand slump."

"That may be possible, of course, but I hardly think that it is," the detective rejoined. "I think you will find that Englebert was all right as far as money was concerned."

"Well, speculation is idle now; in a few days we will know the truth."

"Now, Phenix, I want you to take this case; I want you to investigate the matter, and if you can succeed in proving that Old Abe committed suicide, by Jove, sir, I don't mind paying you a couple of hundred dollars for your trouble!" and the insurance president said this with the air of a man who considered that he had made an extremely handsome offer.

"Well, I am ready to go into the thing if I see any chance for me to make anything out of it," the detective remarked.

"If you do good work you will find me to be a liberal paymaster!" the general declared, pompously.

"Oh, I have no doubt about that, but the offer you have made me is one which I don't think I can accept."

"How so?" exclaimed the insurance man in profound astonishment. "Isn't it liberal enough? By Jove, Phenix, you must be able to make money faster than I can if you can afford to turn up your nose at a chance to make a couple of hundred dollars by a few hours' work."

"The whole trouble is, general, that you have a string tied to your two hundred dollars, and, to my mind, the chances seem to be as great that I will not be able to get it as that I will."

"Bless me! I don't see how you make that out!" the other exclaimed.

"Why, your offer is to give me the money if I can succeed in proving that Mr. Englebert committed suicide; now, suppose I cannot succeed in establishing that fact, where do I come in?"

"Ah, yes, I see," and the insurance man pulled his whiskers and assumed an air of reflection.

"On one hand is two hundred dollars, on the other nothing."

"Yes, just so! But as a business man, Phenix, you can see that we could not afford to pay you unless you could do us some good."

"Well, you could have the satisfaction of knowing the truth about the matter."

"Hang the truth!" exclaimed the general. "What we are after is to establish the fact that he committed suicide, so that we will not be stuck for this money, and our notion was that a smart detective like yourself would be able to get together facts enough to enable us to make a successful fight."

Joe Phenix laughed in his quiet way.

"My dear general, I am not that kind of a detective," he asserted. "I have always made it a rule never to endeavor to distort facts. If you want me to take this case, and endeavor to discover the truth about Mr. Englebert's death, my terms will be ten dollars per day and expenses, which in this case will not amount to much."

"Yes, but you might prove to be a valuable witness for the other side, and that would be ugly, you know, for us to pay out money for a club to beat our own brains out with!" the general declared in a heated way.

"Well, as far as that goes, my report will be made to you, and no one else will know anything about it, and if by any chance any one should discover that I could bear witness of an unfavorable nature to your company, I should deem myself in honor bound to go over to Jersey and keep out of the way until the affair was settled."

"Ah, yes, I see. Well, go ahead on the ten dollar a day basis. I don't want to attempt to bribe you, you know, my dear Phenix, but the two hundred dollar offer stands good!" the general declared with a sly wink, and then he took his departure.

"There is a great deal that looks like rascality in the way some men do business," was the detective's comment.

CHAPTER III.

THE SUPERINTENDENT SPEAKS.

JOE PHENIX was a man who never allowed the grass to grow under his feet, as the saying is, when there was work to be done, so, after accepting the commission of the blustering president of the Everlasting Life Insurance Company he set out immediately to look into the mystery which surrounded the sudden death of Abraham Englebert, the modern Croesus.

But he did not proceed directly to the house of the millionaire: first he called upon the superintendent of police at Headquarters.

He was most cordially received, for the chief of police had a high opinion of the veteran man-hunter.

Taking a chair, Joe Phenix briefly explained that General Miggs had engaged him to look into the Englebert case.

"Did the general tell you that he had called upon me?" the superintendent asked.

"Yes, and he admitted that he did not succeed in getting much information out of you," the detective replied with a smile.

"His whole idea is to make out that Englebert committed suicide, right or wrong, so his company will not have to pay the insurance money," the chief remarked. "And he did not like it at all when I explained to him that it was the business of this department to endeavor to discover the truth about the matter, without regard to who was affected by the publication of the knowledge."

"Well, I had to speak pretty plainly to the general, myself," Joe Phenix observed. "He has evidently been in the habit of doing business with some detectives who, when they find out what a customer wants, do their best to twist circumstances around to suit their employer."

"There are very many such so-called detectives, but they are not worthy of the name!" the superintendent declared.

"He has faith in me, evidently, or else he would undoubtedly have told me to go to thunder when I talked so plainly to him, and I must admit that if I were not interested in the case I would not have had anything to do with this General Blowhard."

"Yes, I understand. You were employed by Englebert only a little while ago."

"I was, and an extremely good man he was to do business with, too. I was shocked by the news of his death."

"It is a very mysterious affair."

"Of course, all I know of the matter is what I gathered from the newspaper account, but it does not seem at all possible to me that the man committed suicide."

"That is my idea!" the superintendent ex-

claimed. "I think there has been foul play. Did the general tell you about his encounter with Doctor Mairstone—the physician whom Englebert kept in the house?"

"Yes, he gave me the particulars," Joe Phenix replied, and great as was the confidence that the detective had in the police chief, he did not think that it was wise to confide to him that Dr. Mairstone had been introduced into the service of the millionaire by himself; that he was one of six special agents whom the detective had recruited—the Silent Six, as he termed them—for the especial purpose of protecting the millionaire from the attacks of some mysterious blackmailers who were endeavoring to make the man of wealth their prey."

"This Mairstone is a shrewd, sensible fellow!" the superintendent declared. "As soon as the discovery was made that Englebert was dead he sent for the police and was careful not to allow anything to be touched until after the arrival of the detective."

"I was at Headquarters when the message containing the particulars arrived from the station and I dispatched two of my best men, Ned Fitzgerald and Wol Fink to look into the matter."

"Both good men," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Yes, you are right! No better detectives in the country to my knowledge!"

"They were at the house in thirty minutes from the time that the death was discovered, and, as I said, Doctor Mairstone had been careful not to allow anything to be disturbed, so the detectives had a clear field."

"If the newspaper men got a full account from you the only discovery that was made was the small vial marked morphine, found by the bedside."

"No, I did not keep anything back. That was all the discovery that was made, and, by the way, Phenix, what do you think in regard to this bottle?" the superintendent asked, abruptly.

"It is a 'plant!'" the detective answered without the least hesitation.

"Aha! you think so?"

"Not a doubt about it in my mind! The bottle was placed by the bedside so that it could be found after the death was discovered and inquiry made into the matter."

"Strange, how alike great minds sometimes work!" the chief exclaimed in a half-joking way. "My opinion is the same as yours exactly in regard to that matter."

"Yes, men of the Englebert stamp don't commit suicide after the fashion of the wild blades of the Bohemian world!" Joe Phenix declared.

"The finding of this vial leads me to believe that Englebert was murdered, and the vial placed where it was found so as to lead to the belief that he had taken his own life."

"It is an old dodge, and so clumsy a one that no detective worthy to be called a man-hunter ought to be deceived by it!" the superintendent answered.

"That is the game evidently. Did your men make a careful examination of the room to see if the locks were all right—that they had not been tampered with?"

"Yes, and they were not able to discover anything out of the way. The door had been forced, you must remember, before the officers got to the house, so that the lock and bolt were in a demoralized condition, but they say that everything seemed to be all right."

"I am well-acquainted with the fastening of the door, for when I was acting for Englebert I had the door so arranged that it was not possible for the smartest workman to get into the room without going to a great deal of trouble, and in order to get at the bolt from the outside a brace and bit would have to be used."

"So the men reported, and they said that there wasn't any evidence that the door had been tampered with, and you can bet all you are worth, Phenix, that if any cracksman had operated on the door my men would have discovered it!"

"Oh, yes, I have no doubt of that. And that point being settled makes it sure that no one got into the room and dosed Englebert after he retired."

"That is what I think," the superintendent remarked.

"It is a strong point in favor of the suicide theory."

"Very true."

"General Miggs said that this Doctor Mairstone was very emphatic in his declaration that there had been foul play, and the inquest would prove it, but the doctor declined to state upon what grounds he based his opinion."

"Very properly too," the chief remarked. "I know the general well enough to conjecture that he went in to bulldoze the whole house; that is his style, you know, and the doctor wouldn't have it!"

"I could have told the general, but I did not care to gratify his curiosity. I thought he might just as well wait until the inquest."

"The doctor did not attempt to hide anything from the detectives," the chief declared.

"What are the points?—if I may ask."

"Certainly! and you will see that this doctor is no fool, but a man who has eyes and knows how to use them."

"Englebert caught a slight cold which grew worse, so the doctor wrote a prescription for him, which Englebert had filled himself at the drug store of Boswell & Cozzard—a first-class house, you will observe."

Joe Phenix nodded assent.

"He had the prescription put up on the night on which he met his death. It was just a little simple cough medicine, and the bottle was found on the table by the bedside when the body was discovered in the morning, and from appearances, Englebert had taken a single dose of it before going to bed."

"Now, as I told you, this Doctor Mairstone is a sharp fellow, and the moment he discovered that Englebert was dead he immediately jumped to the conclusion that some mistake might have occurred in putting up the prescription."

"Yes, I see, a natural conclusion, for such mistakes do occur in the most careful drug-houses in the world."

"He was careful to see that no one touched the bottle of medicine until the detectives came, then he told them of his suspicions and tried to ascertain by touching his tongue to the medicine if it was all right, and the conclusion to which he came was that it was not."

"Now the tale is getting interesting!" Joe Phenix declared.

"When he told my men the conclusion to which he had come, the bottle was carefully sealed and sent to a chemist to be analyzed."

"The doctor was of the opinion that the man came to his death by taking the one dose from the bottle?" Joe Phenix remarked, thoughtfully.

"Yes, and so did my men. It was their belief that a mistake had been made in putting up the prescription. A solution of morphine was one of the ingredients, but in a small quantity only."

"When the morphia vial was found though, both the doctor and the detectives immediately smelt a rat. The detectives were up to the old dodge at once, and the doctor had sense enough to guess that the vial had been placed under the bed so as to lead to the belief that Englebert had taken his own life."

"The doctor was positive that Englebert had never used morphia for a medicine, for he had no need of any such drug, and the fact that the druggist's name was torn off the label also made the three think that there had been foul play, and so they all jumped to the conclusion that it was more likely that the medicine had been got at and tampered with after it had come into Englebert's possession, than that the drug clerk who put it up had made a mistake."

"I presume that no time was lost in putting Boswell & Cozzard through a cross-examination," Joe Phenix suggested.

"You are safe in betting big money on that, Phenix!" the chief exclaimed, emphatically.

"I considered the matter so important that I went in person. No one in the store was aware of the millionaire's death, so I had a clear field, and was able to ask my questions without their suspecting what I was driving at."

"They remembered putting up the prescription distinctly. Both the partners and two clerks happened to be in the prescription-room when the medicine was put up, so there were four men who saw the operation performed, and they were all positive that no mistake was made."

"What made all of them so certain about the matter was that it happened to be the first prescription from Doctor Mairstone that they had ever put up, although Englebert was an old customer; and one of the firm commented on the fact, and the other called the attention of the rest to the beautiful clear hand, like copperplate, as he observed, which the doctor wrote, saying that if all doctors wrote so clearly what a benefit it would be to the clerks who put up the prescriptions."

"That is pretty strong testimony."

"Yes, there is no getting over it; it proves conclusively that no mistake was made in filling the prescription."

"Englebert carried the medicine home in his pocket, and as the night was chilly he probably wore a light overcoat," Joe Phenix remarked, in a reflective way.

"He did! we have discovered that much."

"And when he came in he hung his overcoat on the hall stand, of course. If the medicine was in his overcoat pocket it undoubtedly remained there until he went up-stairs to bed, and so any evil-disposed person in the house would have had ample opportunity to doctor the medicine."

"You have figured the thing out just as I did," the superintendent remarked. "But where we are baffled is that we are not able to find out anything about the medicine from the time it was delivered to Englebert in the drug store until it was found on the table in the morning."

"It is not likely that that missing link can be supplied!" the detective observed. "So I should go on the idea that the theory we have figured out is correct, and proceed to search for the party who got at the bottle."

"That is my notion!" the superintendent declared. "Every one in the house must be shadowed!"

"And now the question rises who had a motive to kill Englebert?"

The chief of police looked grave and shook his head.

"That is an ugly question, Phenix, and I really hate to go into it."

"Yes, but it must be done!"

"This son of Englebert's, Maurice, is his heir, I suppose, and so will profit more by the death of the old man than anybody else."

"Well, I am not sure about the young man being the heir," Joe Phenix remarked. "If you remember, I was employed by Englebert only a little while ago, and while looking after his interests it came to my knowledge that the millionaire had made a will tying up his estate as long as the law would let him, and only allowing his children a moderate sum per year for their support."

"Was the son aware of the existence of this will?" inquired the superintendent in his sharp, decisive way.

"Yes, he was."

"Well, if that will is in existence it removes all motive that the son might have to desire the father's death. But if the will has been destroyed—if the young man is the heir to all the money—then he will bear watching."

Joe Phenix shook his head.

"It will not do any harm to shadow him, but, in my opinion he hasn't pluck enough to try any game of this kind."

"Some tool may have done the work at his instigation!"

"It is possible, but not probable in my opinion; still it will do no harm to keep an eye on him. I am going to the house now and I will try to sound him." And Joe Phenix rose to go.

"If I were you, Phenix, I would throw up this Life Insurance job, for there is likely to be big money in discovering the murderer."

"Yes, I intend to do so," and then the detective departed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SON EXPLAINS.

JOE PHENIX proceeded along the street, deep in meditation.

"It does not seem possible to me that young Englebert could have had a hand in this crime," he muttered.

"To commit a murder of this sort requires a deal of pluck, even though the deed is done by hired assassins."

"Young Englebert is a shallow-headed fellow, weak and easily tempted, but it does not seem possible that he could have been persuaded to have any share in so fearful a crime."

"If he did there is some strong fellow in the background—some man of brains, who got up this plot and then persuaded the son to take a hand in it."

"But the motive! that is wanting—that is, if the will is in existence; if it is not, if the young man is joint heir with his sister to his father's enormous wealth, then there would be a motive for the crime, but for the sake of common humanity I don't want to believe that any son could be guilty of so terrible a deed."

"In such meditations as these was the mind of the detective employed until he reached the palace-like mansion which the now dead money-making had erected."

Joe Phenix sent in his name to Maurice Englebert with a request for an interview. He was ushered into the parlor, and in a few minutes the son of the dead millionaire entered.

Maurice Englebert was a good-looking young man of five and twenty, but had a weak, irresolute face, and any judge of human nature would have immediately decided that he possessed but little firmness or stability.

He looked pale and careworn, and it was plain that the terrible calamity had made a deep impression upon him.

He bowed in answer to the detective's salutation, and asked him to be seated, taking a chair himself after the visitor had done so.

"This is a sad affair," the detective remarked.

"Yes, a dreadful blow," the young man replied with a heavy sigh.

"You must pardon my calling upon you, but I come in the interest of General Miggs," the detective explained.

"Yes, the general was here this morning, and said he would be obliged to employ detectives, and I can assure you, Mr. Phenix, I am glad that you have come, and not a stranger, since it is necessary that detectives should come at all."

"A little flattery sometimes does well," quoted the detective with a quiet smile.

"Oh, I am honest in my declaration, I assure you!" the young man exclaimed, earnestly.

"Well, I am glad that you have a good opinion of me. I was afraid that it would be otherwise."

The color came in young Englebert's face; he appeared to be embarrassed for a moment, and then he said:

"I understand what you mean, Mr. Phenix, and I assure you I do not bear any ill-will for what took place in the past."

"I was weak enough to be led by a designing villain into the commission of a crime, and you,

in the discharge of your duty, were smart enough to catch me, and I regard it as a singularly fortunate circumstance that matters happened as they did."

"If I had escaped to Canada with the money which I intended to steal from my father, it probably would have made me an outcast for life."

"Very probable indeed."

"As it happened, you arrested me on the very threshold of the door which led to the downward path into which, had my footsteps strayed, the chances are that there would never have been any redemption for me."

"So, Mr. Phenix, instead of bearing you any malice for the part you played, I am really grateful that you interfered as you did, for it undoubtedly was my salvation."

"Well, I am glad that you are able to look at the matter in this light," the detective remarked.

"Yes, Mr. Phenix, and it gives me pleasure to be able to say as much to you. My father acted nobly in the matter. He believed me when I said I would behave myself so that in the future he would not have any cause of complaint, and I assure you, Mr. Phenix, I kept my word."

"Under these sad circumstances it must be a pleasure to you to think that you did keep your word," the detective remarked.

"Yes, it is," responded the young man, deeply affected.

"As I explained to you, General Miggs wished me to examine into the particulars of your father's death. He seems convinced that it is a suicide, but from what I have learned, it seems certain that it was not."

"At first I was inclined to believe that my father had taken his own life, although I could not understand why he should do so, as there was no reason for such a deed, but now that I have had time to reflect, and have conversed with Doctor Mairstone about the matter, I am forced to the conclusion that either my father was the victim of a druggist's mistake, or else has been foully murdered."

"The detectives who have looked into the matter assure me that there is nothing in the theory that an error was made in putting up the prescription."

"If that is true—if my father was murdered, wherefore the motive for the crime? I can understand, Mr. Phenix, that it is more than probable that suspicion may be directed against myself," the young man went on hurriedly, without giving the other a chance to speak.

"It will be supposed that I am the heir to my father's vast property, and that in order to possess myself of the money I became a parricide; but, Mr. Phenix, I believe that you must be acquainted with the fact that there is a will in existence which holds the estate in trust, and that neither my sister nor myself have anything but a yearly income."

"Yes, I am aware that there was a will to that effect, but whether it is in existence now or not I am unable to say."

"I think that it is in existence; I do not believe that my father destroyed it," the young man remarked.

"I am not able to speak with absolute certainty upon the point, for my father did not favor me with his confidence."

"The truth will soon be known, though, for all the keys have been placed in Doctor Mairstone's care, in readiness to be surrendered to the proper officers, and as soon as they make their examination, the truth will be known."

"Well, I must say that you appear to be acting perfectly correct and above-board in this matter," the detective remarked.

"I can assure you that I am sincere in my desire to lead a thoroughly blameless life," the young man asserted, earnestly.

"I am aware that the finger of suspicion will probably be directed against me, and that a great many people, who know but little of me, will believe that I have a guilty knowledge of my father's death, and under the circumstances any protestations of mine will have but little weight, and I must depend upon time for my vindication."

"Of course the theory which most people have in regard to mysterious crimes of this sort is that the party who is most apt to profit by the untimely taking off of the victim is the one most likely to be either the murderer or the instigator of the deed."

"Yes, I am aware of that fact," Maurice said, sadly. "Mr. Phenix, I am sorry that you have agreed to act for the insurance people in this matter!" the young man continued, abruptly. "I wish you were free to act for me, for I have a presentiment that I shall need the advice of some such man as yourself."

The detective reflected upon the idea for a few moments, and the longer he thought upon the matter the stronger to him seemed the advantages which would come if he accepted the offer, so he finally said:

"Well, I think an arrangement can be made so that I can act for you."

"True I have agreed to act for General Miggs but I can get out of that easily enough. The general's desire is to make out that your father

committed suicide, so that his company can get out of paying the fifty thousand dollars which otherwise can be collected."

"Yes, I understand that; the general's motive for busying himself with the affair at all is a thoroughly selfish one."

"There isn't any use of my taking the general's money, for I am already satisfied that your father did not take his own life, and when I go to him and tell him this, he will undoubtedly be glad to release me, but it does not matter whether he is willing or not. I will not act for him, and that settles the matter."

Mr. Phenix, you have taken a load from my mind, for I know I can depend upon you to protect my interests!" the young man declared, rising, taking the hand of the detective and shaking it warmly.

After a few more words of slight importance Joe Phenix took his departure.

"Is he honest or playing a deep game?" the detective muttered as he went on his way. "If he is a guilty man he has made the mistake of a lifetime in engaging my services for I will be sure to trap him in the long run no matter how cunningly he plays!"

CHAPTER V. A SURPRISE.

AND now a week goes by, and during that time much occurs.

The inquest upon the body of the money-king was held, and the doctors decided that death had come from a heavy dose of morphine.

All the parts of the old man were in a healthy condition, and the conclusion to which the eminent medical men came was that Englebert would have lived a good twenty years if he had not been so untimely cut down by the secret blow of an assassin.

That there had been foul play there was no doubt, General Miggs and his frantic expostulations to the contrary, notwithstanding.

The chemists had analyzed the cough mixture, and their report was that nine-tenths of the contents of the bottle was morphine, so it was plain that the vial had been tampered with after it had left the hands of the druggist.

The millionaire had prepared himself for rest, and then taken the deadly drug, thinking that it was an innocent cough mixture, little dreaming that he was taking a potent poison which would give him quick dispatch to the land of everlasting rest.

This was a surprise to the public at large, but not to the detectives, who had suspected the truth from the first, for the clumsy trick of placing the empty morphine vial under the bed had not deceived the acute man-hunters.

They had scoured the city, by the way, in hopes to discover the druggist whose name had once been on the label, but had not been successful in their search.

The proper officers had made an exhaustive examination of the affairs of the dead man; the estate was worth over twenty millions of dollars, according to their report; and by law this must be equally divided between the son and the daughter, for nothing in the shape of a will was found, much to the surprise of Joe Phenix, and to the apparent astonishment of young Englebert.

This circumstance gave rise to a great deal of gossip, and, as the young man had supposed, to the suspicion that he had a guilty knowledge of his father's death, but despite the utmost efforts of the detectives, spurred on by the superintendent of police, who had set his heart upon discovering the murderer, not a particle of evidence could be found as to who had committed the deed of blood.

The chief of police and Joe Phenix had half-a-dozen interviews in regard to the matter.

"The son, and daughter, have profited most by the father's death; ergo they know something of the crime! That is the argument, but one can't prove it!" the superintendent declared.

"I am completely puzzled!" Joe Phenix admitted. "It is utterly out of the question, to my thinking, that the daughter had anything to do with the crime, and if the son did he has more nerve than any man I ever ran across, but it does not seem to me that he is built that way. If he is, then I don't know one half as much about men as I thought I did."

"The disappearance of this will that you told about has an ugly look for the young fellow!" the chief declared.

"Yes, but if he is not more astonished about the matter than anybody else, then he is the finest actor I ever met with in all my experience," the detective replied.

Maurice felt that he was regarded with suspicion and consulted Joe Phenix as to what he had better do.

"Offer a big reward for the apprehension of the murderer, and the promise of a pardon, and a goodly sum of money, to any pal who is willing to give away the principal!" the detective counseled.

This was done, and for a week or so the offer was the talk of the town, but New York is a big city and sensations succeed each other so rapidly that it must be a stupendous affair indeed which can claim the attention of the people for more than a couple of weeks, so that in a month from

the time of Old Abe's death, his tragic taking off had become such an old story that it was almost forgotten.

The only ones who kept the affair green in their memories were the detectives, who lived in hopes that they might accidentally some day stumble upon a clew which would give them a hint as to the murderer, and enable them to clutch the rich reward offered for his apprehension.

Young Englebert had wound up all his father's affairs, announcing that he had no head for business, and as he had money enough he did not intend to follow in his father's footsteps. He set himself down to enjoy life, having taken it into his head to become one of the leaders of society in the city.

Of course, the old-established families would have nothing to do with this modern upstart, particularly as the suspicion that he had a guilty knowledge of his father's death still clung to him, but there were plenty of the "shoddy" families who were glad to welcome him on account of his wealth, and among these he got on very well.

Doctor Mairstone, after the dead man's affairs were settled up, thought to withdraw from the mansion, but Maurice would not hear to it.

"I don't need a doctor, thank Heaven!" he exclaimed. "But I do need a man in whom I can trust, and in all my experience I have never met anybody in whom I have more confidence than yourself."

"Remain here and take charge of my business matters. I will pay you the same salary that you received from my father, or if that is not enough I will increase the amount."

"Rosalind, my sister, too, is not well; she is not a strong girl physically and needs careful medical care. She has confidence in you and for her sake I think you ought to remain."

This proposition was so flattering to the doctor's pride that he could not help accepting, and so he continued to be an inmate of the Englebert mansion.

And although the young man would not have been willing to make the confession to any one, yet he had learned to take a greater interest in the sweet-tempered gentle Rosalind than was wise in a man like himself, utterly without money, but youth will do these reckless things.

CHAPTER VI.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

THREE months went by and affairs in the Englebert mansion were going on as smoothly as though young Maurice had always been the master of the household.

Despite all the strenuous efforts of the detectives not the slightest clew had been discovered in regard to the murder of Old Abe, and whenever anybody happened to bring up the affair, the general declaration was that the murder had gone to take its place with those mysterious crimes which in days gone by have thrilled the metropolis to its center, and the perpetrators of which have never been discovered.

A deep, dark mystery it was, and the police, from the superintendent downward, despaired of ever being able to bring the crime home to the unknown murderer.

One man only in all of big New York was still staunch on the trail, and that was the veteran bloodhound, Joe Phenix.

"Patience, patience!" he exclaimed to himself. "Time works wonders! At present the murderer is safe in hiding and he will be sure to remain in concealment until the hue and cry is over and then, when he thinks that the detectives have given up all hope of catching the doer of the deed, he will venture forth, and he must be an extremely expert scoundrel indeed if he does not make some false move so as to give me a chance at him."

And so it happened that while the regular police force had given up all hope of ever being able to catch the murderer of the millionaire, Joe Phenix was playing the role of the cat on the watch, and never did a gray grimalkin watch a rat hole, eager to pounce upon the prey, with more patience than the veteran man-hunter plotted and planned to apprehend the man who stole away the life of the money-king.

Rosalind Englebert sat in her cozy room with one of her lady acquaintances—one of her particular chums, and they were chatting away at a great rate, after the fashion of young and lively girls.

The friend was a daughter of the upper ten, one of the girls who prided herself upon being particularly "swagger," to use the fashionable slang of the day, and she was telling Rosalind of the merits of a French waiting-maid whom she had just secured.

"My maid left me yesterday and I have not engaged another yet," Rosalind observed. "I have had plenty of applications, but none of them just suited me. It is dreadful hard work to get a good girl."

"That is very true!" exclaimed the other. "I have had twenty and hardly one of the number was good for anything, but this French girl is a treasure!"

"Well, my last girl was pretty good, but the one that I had before her was just splendid!"

Rosalind exclaimed. "She was finely educated, had traveled extensively, and really was more like a friend than a hired maid, yet she knew her place and never presumed upon the familiarity with which I treated her, but really it was not possible to treat such a girl like a common servant."

"I felt sorry when she left, which was very suddenly, and without her giving any reason. She merely said she had to go, and she was not able to tell me why."

"Why that was very mysterious, wasn't it?"

"Indeed it was! And there was something about the girl which made me always think that she was far superior to the position which she held. I told her when she left that if she ever needed a friend I would be glad too assist her in any way; and she thanked me and replied that she knew that well enough, and then, would you believe it? we both cried, and she took me in her arms and kissed me a half-a-dozen times just as if she was an elder sister."

"Why, the idea!" exclaimed Miss Upper Ten, half shocked at the recital of such an out-of-the-way proceeding. "I never heard of such a thing in all my life!"

"Well, it does seem awful strange now, when I tell about it, even to me, but it didn't at the time. It appeared to be all right, and just the proper thing to do, and I am sure I hugged and kissed her just as heartily as she did me."

"Well, I must say that it is the oddest thing that I ever heard of in all my experience!"

"Yes, I know that it seems strange, but if you were to know Mignon—that is her name—as I knew her, you wouldn't think that it was strange that I should become so attached to her."

"It is a pretty name."

"Isn't it? Mignon Lawrence she was called, and although she was not a beautiful girl, yet she was attractive-looking and extremely lady-like."

At this moment there was a knock on the door. It was the footman who bore a message that there was a young woman by the name of Lawrence who would like to speak to Miss Englebert.

Rosalind jumped to her feet in glee.

"Show her up at once, John!" she exclaimed. Now, Annie, you will have a chance to see my paragon!" she continued after the servant departed.

"My curiosity is very strongly excited I will admit!" the other declared.

In a few minutes the footman ushered a tall, splendidly-proportioned girl, neatly dressed, into the room.

She could not be called beautiful, but she was decidedly attractive-looking, for she had regular, strongly-marked features, and appeared like a girl who possessed uncommon intelligence and resolution.

The footman retired after showing the girl into the apartment.

Rosalind rose to receive her with outstretched hands.

"Oh, Mignon, I am so glad to see you!" she exclaimed, and then, unable to resist the impulse, regardless of the presence of Miss Vanderbilt, she threw her arms around the newcomer, and while tears stood in the eyes of both girls they embraced and kissed each other as though they were the dearest friends in the world.

No one to see them would ever have believed that they had once been mistress and maid.

"Oh, my darling, I have missed you so much since I have been away from you!" the stranger exclaimed, caressing the other with all a mother's tenderness.

"You have not missed me any more than I have missed you!" the other declared.

And then suddenly remembering Miss Vanderbilt's presence, she withdrew from the arms of the other and said:

"I forgot that we were not alone; Mignon, this is Miss Vanderbilt, an old schoolmate and the very dear friend of whom you have often heard me speak."

The new-comer had now recovered her composure and she bowed politely to the young lady.

Miss Vanderbilt prided herself upon her correct behavior, and her verdict upon Rosalind's reception of her old waiting-maid was that she was a rather silly, sentimental thing, and being a great stickler for the proprieties of life, she had made up her mind that when the girl saluted her she would remain seated and bow in a strictly proper manner.

But, somehow, when the girl fixed the keen gray eyes upon her face, and said in her musical, deep-toned voice:

"It gives me great pleasure to meet a lady whom I have so often heard spoken of so highly." Annie Vanderbilt could no more keep her seat and content herself with bowing with cold politeness than if the other had been one of the first dames of the metropolis.

Miss Vanderbilt, a well-educated, finely brought-up girl, having enjoyed all the advantages that money could give, had sense enough to understand that the other was a lady in every respect, even if she did act as a waiting-maid.

Up she rose to her feet, and, by a sudden im-

pulse, extended her hand with as much cordiality as though the other had been a daughter of a millionaire, while a charming smile lit up her handsome features.

"I am pleased to meet you, Miss Lawrence!" she declared with well-bred grace.

"Take off your hat, Mignon, sit down and make yourself at home!" the heiress declared, assisting the other to remove the article with her own hand and then leading her a chair.

"But first say that you have come to stay with me!"

"Well, I have, if you want me!" the other replied.

"If I want you!" and Rosalind gave the girl another embrace. "You know well enough that I want you. I would not have believed that it could be possible I could have missed any one as I have missed you!"

"I am glad to hear you say that. I must admit that when I am here with you it seems more like home than any place I have been in for years," the girl remarked.

"But where have you been since you went away?" Rosalind asked. "I have always looked for you when I went out, expecting that I would see you some time, but my eyes have never been gladdened by the sight of your face."

"I have been out of the city," the other explained. "After I left here I went to California."

"Is that possible?" Rosalind exclaimed.

"That is a trip I have always wanted to make. You went last year, Annie, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes, and I had a delightful time. I shall never forget my visit to the big trees!" Miss Vanderbilt exclaimed.

"I went to the Yosemite valley also," Miss Lawrence observed. "In fact, I saw everything that was to be seen, from the Chinese quarter in 'Frisko to Mount Shasta and the wild, picturesque scenery of Oregon."

Miss Vanderbilt looked astonished.

What sort of a waiting-maid was this?

"You did not go alone?" Rosalind inquired.

"Oh, no, there was a round dozen in the party," and then the speaker suddenly came to the conclusion that she had spoken too freely.

"But I forgot that I had got back to the position of waiting-maid again, and I mustn't brag about my travels or you will think that I am a very queer kind of a waiting-maid!" she declared with a laugh.

"You are a regular mystery, Mignon!" Rosalind exclaimed, while Miss Vanderbilt devoured the girl with her eyes, her curiosity so strongly excited that she was mightily tempted to cross-examine the incomprehensible speaker.

"Oh, I will not bother you with any questions!" the heiress declared. "I am so glad to get you back that I am content to take you as you are without asking you where you have been or what you have been doing."

Miss Vanderbilt happened to look at her watch at this point and declared that she must be going as she had an appointment.

The two girls thus left together had a good long chat, Rosalind getting Mignon to sit in the big Turkish easy-chair, and then nestling in her arms in the most affectionate manner.

Rosalind spoke of the terrible loss she had sustained and Mignon comforted her.

"You have come back to be my maid?" the heiress asked, abruptly.

"Yes."

"Well, I am not going to have you occupy such a position, which is utterly unworthy of a girl like yourself, for I can see plainly enough that you are a lady both by birth and breeding!" the girl declared. "I am rich now, my own mistress, and I can do as I like. You shall be my friend and companion. I can get a dozen maids, but not a friend like yourself, and I am going to bind you to me with hooks of steel! You can brush my hair if you want to, for no one does it like you!"

And then the two sealed the compact with a kiss.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ODD WOOING.

A KNOCK at the door interrupted the conversation.

It was Maurice Englebert and he was astonished upon beholding Miss Lawrence.

Rosalind explained gleefully that Mignon had come back to remain with her, and that henceforth she would be her friend and companion.

"I am glad to hear it," the young man announced. "Miss Lawrence knows that I always had a high respect for her," and he bowed, gallantly.

The girl returned the salutation in a polite manner, seeming to take the compliment as a matter of course.

The call to dinner interrupted the conversation and the three descended to the dining-room.

After the meal was ended Maurice got a chance to speak to Mignon alone, Rosalind having gone to her room to write some letters, and the doctor, who formed one of the party at the table, being in the library, looking at the evening journals.

Mignon was in the parlor, seated by one of the windows looking out upon the street, upon

which the mantle of night was rapidly descending.

Maurice came in, took a chair on the opposite side of the window and then remarked, abruptly:

"You went away very suddenly."

"Yes, I had business which would not admit of delay."

"Did my father have anything to do with your going?"

The girl appeared astonished at the question, and looked, inquiringly, at the questioner.

"No, of course not; why should you think that he had?"

"Well, I didn't know. I haven't anything to go on; it was only an idea that came into my head. I did not stand very well with my father at the time that you were here," the young man remarked. "I will admit that it was my own fault. I made a fool of myself, and the old gentleman was smart enough to find it out by means of an army of spies with which he filled the house, and I didn't know but some one of these spies had made the discovery that I was taking an interest in you, and had reported the matter to my father, so he had given you a hint to go."

"No, your surmise is not correct. Your father did not say anything to me; I went on my own account."

"That is strange," the young man remarked, in a gloomy way.

"I told you that business called me away."

"No, I don't mean that it was strange that you should go, but I think that it is very odd that you should not have said anything to me before you went."

"Oh, I hadn't anything to say," the girl replied, in an indifferent way.

"You know that I was willing to make an idiot of myself at one time for your sake?"

"When you wanted me to run away with you, eh?" and Mignon laughed, merrily. "That would have been making a fool of yourself? Well, I must say that you are candid if not complimentary!"

"As I was then situated, entirely dependent upon my father, it would have been an extremely foolish act."

"I tried to tell you so at the time, but you didn't want to listen to me."

"I must admit that you had more sense than I."

"Much obliged for the compliment!"

"I felt hurt, though, when you went away without even taking the trouble to bid me goodbye."

"In my judgment it was for the best. I may be wrong in the assumption, but I thought so at the time, and so I acted on the idea," the girl replied, in a reflective way.

"I suppose that you know my position has changed materially in the last few months?" the young man remarked.

"Yes, I read all the particulars in regard to your father's death; it was perfectly dreadful!" the girl declared.

"Very true; and it looks now as if the murderer would never be discovered, although I offered a princely reward; but the detectives, though they did their best to get the money, have finally been obliged to confess that the mystery is too great for them."

While he had been speaking, Mignon had her keen gray eyes fixed intently on his face, as though she would read his very soul.

"It was a very mysterious crime, indeed," the girl said, slowly.

"Yes, and it made a vast difference in my fortunes, from being dependent upon my father's bounty I became the owner of millions, my own master, able to do exactly as I please."

"It must be very nice to be situated in that way, I should think," the girl remarked.

"You were aware, I presume, of how matters stood before you came to the house this time?"

"Oh, yes, I knew that you had come in for half your father's fortune. I read all about it in the newspapers. I was away off in California when the tragedy occurred."

"And I presume you came East as soon as you could after you ascertained how I was situated?" Maurice remarked, an unpleasant ring in his voice.

"No, I didn't! I could have come a couple of months ago, if I had been in any hurry to get back, but I wasn't," the girl retorted.

"I know what you mean!" and the proud lip of Mignon curled in contempt. "You want to insinuate that I came back to this house because you are now a rich man, instead of a poor one; but you never made a greater mistake in your life. It does not matter a snap to me whether you are rich or poor."

"I came here because it suited me, and I am not obliged to explain my reasons to you. One thing I will say, though, and that is, I love your sister as I have never loved any human being in my life, and I would be willing to do a great deal and give up a great deal to be near her."

"It is a great pity that you couldn't extend a little of the love to the brother," the young man remarked, with a gloomy attempt to be humorous.

"Well, you are singularly contradictory," Mignon declared, with a laugh. "In one breath

you accuse me of running away from you because you were poor, and coming back when you became rich, making me out to be the meanest kind of a girl, and then, when I deny the imputation, you declare that you wish I would bestow my affections upon you."

"Yes, I am aware that I am not very consistent," Maurice replied. "And I will admit I was so annoyed at the way in which you departed that I fancied all the love I once had for you had turned to hate, but now, when I converse with you, I find that the old-time spell has not lost its power, and I believe that I like you as well as I ever did."

"You are going on the idea that an honest confession is good for the soul, eh?" Mignon exclaimed, not at all serious about the matter.

"Well, 'Barkis may be willing,' but the lady is not!"

"I see that you do not believe that I am serious."

"Oh, I suppose you think that you are, but I will tell you, frankly, that I think you are a very changeable young man; now, if I should listen to your protestations, and allow my heart's young affections to go out to you, the first thing I would know you would be after some other girl and leave poor me to mourn in solitude."

"Mignon, I will swear to you that I never saw a girl in my life whom I liked one-half as well as I do you!" the young man exclaimed, earnestly.

"Well, now, I declare! you are playing the ardent lover to perfection!" she exclaimed laughing. "And I have no doubt you think you are sincere, but I have a deal of doubt about the matter."

"It isn't natural, you know, for a man like you, who is worth millions, to fall in love with a girl who is obliged to go out and work for her bread as a waiting-maid."

"I don't see why that should make any difference!"

"Oh, don't you?"

"Indeed I do not! I fell in love with you first when I was entirely dependent upon my father, and I fully realized that if I should brave his anger and marry a poor girl like yourself, I would never get a penny of his money. For all that I became over head-and-ears in love with you, and would have run away and married you if I could have gained your consent."

"You see I was wiser than you were. I told you at the time that it was folly, and now I hope that you will acknowledge that I was right."

"Yes, you were; I will admit that!"

"And the situation is just about as bad now as it was then," Mignon declared.

"I don't see how you make that out!" Maurice declared.

"It is perfectly apparent, if you will only take the trouble to look at the matter in the right light," she replied.

"You think that you are very much in love with me; now suppose I allow you to persuade me that this is the truth, and we are married?"

"My idea is that in a few months you would be tired of your bargain, and then a nice position I would be in?"

"You would be my wife, and I couldn't get rid of you even if I wanted to!" the young man declared, in a sulky way.

"Yes, that may be true, but I am not going to risk being the deserted wife of even a millionaire, so you will excuse me from trying the experiment, please."

"We will be good friends, Maurice, and that is all!"

"You will know me better some day!" the young man declared, departing in a rage.

"Decidedly, that man is not of the stuff of which murderers are made," the girl remarked, musingly.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ENGLISHMAN.

ON the west side of New York, as the region to the west of lower Broadway and upper Fifth avenue is called, there are streets where in the olden time the solid men of the Metropolis went to live, but now the boarding-house and the "furnished rooms" dwelling have taken the place of the well-to-do business men.

Especially in the neighborhood of the pleasure ground known as Washington Square do the thrifty, hard-working women cluster who attempt to get a living by keeping boarders and renting out furnished rooms.

There is one particular cross-street leading from the Square where almost every other house is devoted to one of these two purposes.

On the same day that Mignon Lawrence returned so unexpectedly to the Englebert mansion, and just about the same time that Rosalind was welcoming her so warmly, a well-dressed stranger, who looked like an Englishman, turned from Washington Square into the cross street and walked slowly along it, examining the houses with a critical eye as he proceeded as though he was in search of some one particular dwelling.

The gentleman was about the medium height, had a peculiar dark face, as though he had been exposed to southern suns, wore a short beard, parted in the center after the fashion affected by

many Englishmen, and when he lifted his hat, displaced by a sudden gust of wind, it showed that he wore his hair carefully parted in the middle.

Both hair and beard were a golden red, quite a contrast to the dark face.

Ten houses up the street he stopped before a certain dwelling, which like the great majority of the houses in the neighborhood, had a small, written card affixed to the side of the house by the door.

The gentleman's attention was attracted by the door plate which, in distinct characters, bore the inscription,

"MISS A. JONES."

He ascended the steps, read the written card, which said "Furnished Rooms," and then pulled the bell.

The summons was answered by a middle-aged lady, with a very sharp face and a decidedly warlike manner.

"Miss Jones?" inquired the gentleman, very politely and with a decided English accent.

"Yes, sir, that is my name," responded the lady, who had a shrill voice and a very aggressive way, the result of long years of warfare with a quarrelsome world.

"Ah, yes, I am pleased to meet you, Miss Jones," and the stranger lifted his hat and bowed in a polite way; if she had been one of the first ladies in the land he could not have been more respectful, a fact which immediately excited the suspicions of the lady, for long experience had taught her that sharpers, and rogues generally, were much more inclined to be civil than plain, honest people.

"What might you want?" the lady inquired, in a tone full of suspicion.

"I saw your advertisement in the newspaper to-day, and as I am in search of quarters I thought I would call and see what you had in the way of rooms."

"Yes, sir, walk in, please!" exclaimed Miss Jones, her tone changing, for the gentleman looked like a desirable lodger.

The stranger entered, being particular to remove his headgear as he did so.

"What kind of a room would you like, sir?" asked the landlady, as she closed the door.

"Well, I want a good-sized one. I am an author by profession, and have visited the United States for the purpose of writing a book about the country."

"Yes, sir," and the landlady looked at the gentleman in a dubious way.

Her experience with the gentlemen who had claimed to be authors was not pleasant, although limited.

She had had two in the house at different times, authors they said they were, although she had never been able to discover what books they had written, but both were extremely dilatory about paying for their rooms, and were remarkably irregular in their habits, being accustomed to coming in at all hours, and at times extremely full of beer.

The landlady did not understand, of course, but these "authors" were the men of the "skirmish line," who picked up a precarious living by doing odd jobs in a literary way, modern penny-a-liners in fact.

But the landlady was shrewd enough to see that this author was not at all like the others and she was perplexed.

The gentleman was a keen observer, and immediately saw that he had not made a favorable impression by proclaiming himself to be a literary man.

"I am not a regular author, you understand," he exclaimed. "I write merely for amusement, not for bread, as I have an income which affords me ample support."

"Yes, sir, I see," and the sharp face of Miss Jones brightened a little. "How would you like a nice parlor-room," and she introduced him into the front room on the first floor.

"This is the best room I have. You see that it is nicely furnished, with a folding bed, and it is a very comfortable room."

"This will suit; there is no need of looking further, I will take this room. What is the rental, Miss Jones?" the gentleman asked, drawing out his pocketbook with a promptness which pleased the landlady greatly.

"Well, I have always got five dollars—"

"Quite reasonable, I am sure!" the gentleman declared.

Then he opened his pocketbook, took out a roll of bills, which the sharp eyes of the landlady saw were all of large denominations, selected a twenty dollar note and tendered it to Miss Jones.

"I can't change so large a bill," the landlady declared, an immediate suspicion seizing upon her that the bill was a bad one, although it looked to be perfectly good.

"No need of changing it, madam," the gentleman said with the air of a prince. "I will pay you four weeks in advance, as I shall be likely to remain with you for some time."

Miss Jones was amazed; in all her experience as a lodging-house keeper she had never met so liberal a gentleman.

"I am very much obliged, sir, I am sure," she declared, with a thankful heart.

"My name is Rochester—George Rochester," the gentleman announced. "I will have my trunks sent up from the hotel at once. I have been stopping at the Astor House."

"Yes, sir, I will have the room all ready for you."

"I will be back in about an hour, and I am very glad indeed to have secured such comfortable quarters."

The two were standing just inside the parlor, by the threshold, and at this point the outside door opened and a lady entered.

She was a good-looking brunette, finely formed and nicely dressed.

One of those women whose age it is hard to guess, for though she did not look to be over twenty-two or three, yet she might be ten years older.

There was a worried, anxious look upon her face as though she was not easy in her mind.

She bowed to the landlady, glanced at the stranger, hesitated for a moment, as though she did not like to speak in his presence, and then said:

"Here is the three dollars, Miss Jones, and I am sorry that I have been obliged to keep you waiting."

From a little pocketbook, which only contained a few small pieces of silver besides the bills, she produced three dollars and gave them to the landlady.

"Oh, that is all right, no hurry!" Miss Jones remarked.

"I am ever so much obliged!" the lady said in a grateful way, and then she went on up-stairs.

Mr. Rochester followed her with his eyes, a puzzled expression upon his face.

"Really, you know, I think I have seen that lady before," he observed, after she had passed out of hearing. "But I cannot place her, and it is strange too, for I usually have an excellent memory."

"Might I inquire her name?"

"Certainly, there's no harm. Her name is Englebert, Mrs. Englebert."

"Ah, now I am sure I have met her, for I remember the name."

CHAPTER IX.

THE WOMAN'S STORY.

"WELL, any one who ever heard the name would be apt to remember it, for it is not a common one," Miss Jones remarked.

"That is true; it is an odd name, and as I said, I have a very retentive memory, still I must admit that it has not served me as well in this case as it usually does, for as I was not able to remember the lady's name, now I am totally at a loss to recall the circumstances under which I met her, yet I am sure I have done so and during the last year too," the gentleman remarked in a reflective way, evidently greatly puzzled.

"She has had a room here now about six months," Miss Jones observed. "And she is as nice and as quiet a little woman as I have ever had in the house, and I feel very much interested in her, for she has had a hard time of it, and through no fault of hers, either."

"Dear me! is that possible?" continued the gentleman interested immediately.

"Yes, it's like a regular story out of a book, and maybe you would like to hear it as you are an author, for I am sure that you can't make up any story that will be any stranger."

"Well, now, really you have excited my curiosity!" Mr. Rochester declared. "And I must say that I would be greatly obliged if you would tell me the story. I feel sure that it would be very interesting. I can see by the lady's face that she has had trouble."

"I pride myself, you know, upon my skill in reading faces," he added, a little egotistically.

"It is a very strange story indeed!" Miss Jones declared.

"Keeping lodgers as I do, and have for the past five years, I have met a great many very odd people, and as some folks, you know, will tell their business to strangers, I have heard some strange stories, but none of them were any stranger than Mrs. Englebert's and I know all about that of my own knowledge."

"Ah, yes, she looks as if she might be the heroine of a sad tale!" the gentleman declared with a sympathetic shake of the head.

"She came here about six months ago, said she was a stranger in New York and wanted a good comfortable room in a house where she would not be afraid to stay alone, as her husband was a traveling man and was going off on a trip to be gone a couple of months."

"Of course, a house like yours just suited her."

"Oh, yes, because I pride myself upon keeping none but quiet, respectable people!" the landlady declared.

"She took a room and explained that her husband would only be here a few days, for he was going away just as soon as his things were ready, and sure enough in about three days after they came he went away."

"The lady made quite a time about his going. I found out afterward that they had only been married about two weeks."

"I heard her crying in the hall and came out to see what was the matter, but it was only Mr. Englebert bidding her good-by."

"He was a very nice old gentleman; old enough really to be her father, and, really, when I got a good look at him I wondered why a young woman like she is came to marry an old man."

"Such things do happen, you know," the gentleman observed with the air of a philosopher.

"She might have been in poor circumstances and be well-to-do. Many women often marry more for the sake of getting a good home than because they love the man."

"Well, I guess that was about the idea in this case, for she told me afterward that her marriage was a hasty one, and that she had only known her husband three days before they were married, and she admitted that at the time she made his acquaintance she really didn't know what she was going to do, for she was a stranger in this country, unable to get work and without either friends or money."

"Of course, under such circumstances he appeared to her like a guardian angel."

"He was very much of a gentleman; I could see it plainly although that night was the only time I ever spoke to him, and I only exchanged a few words then. He told her not to cry, that he would be back in two months and said to me in a very friendly way, 'Miss Jones, you must take good care of my little wife here,' and I told him not to worry for she would be all right."

"That was very kind of you, I must say!" Mr. Rochester declared with an approving nod.

"Well, he went away, and from that time to this she has never either seen, or heard a word from him!" Miss Jones declared in an impressive way.

"Is it possible?" the gentleman exclaimed, evidently taking the deepest interest in the story.

"Yes, it is! He was to be gone a couple of months, he said, not longer than that, and he might be back in a month, as it depends altogether upon business."

"Ah, yes, I understand."

"He gave her a hundred dollars which he said would be ample to keep her until he came back; and expecting that he would return as he said, she was not as saving with the money as she might have been."

"Very natural!"

"She was a little worried because she did not hear from him, although he had told her that he was traveling around so that she must not expect many letters, but he did not say that he wouldn't write at all."

"I should have thought that under such circumstances she would have been uneasy."

"She was, but when the end of the two months came she brightened up, as she expected he would come, but I didn't!" the landlady declared with an indignant sniff.

"Ah, I see, your ripe judgment led you to suspect that all was not right."

"Exactly! for I believed after two or three weeks went by without her receiving any letters that the man had deserted her."

"And, as I tell you, Mr. Rochester, I will not have any but respectable people in my house, so when my suspicions were excited I questioned her about her marriage."

"She is not very bright!" and Miss Jones shook her head; "rather simple, and she did not suspect what I was driving at. But everything was all right. She told me all about her marriage without any hesitation: showed me the marriage-certificate and told me just where the minister's house was up in Harlem."

"I am inclined to be suspicious, you see, Mr. Rochester; a woman who keeps a furnished-room house has got to be to get along," the landlady declared. "And though she talked as if she was telling the truth, and the marriage-certificate seemed to be all right, yet I didn't feel altogether certain about the matter, so I went up to Harlem and saw the minister myself. I just said I was a friend of the lady, and as the marriage was a kind of a sudden, secret affair, I wanted to find out if everything was all right."

"Really, Miss Jones, I must congratulate you!" the gentleman exclaimed, admiringly. "You played the detective to perfection! I presume you found that the lady had spoken the truth, or else you would not have allowed her to remain in your house."

"Yes; the minister was a German, but he spoke pretty good English, and he remembered all about the marriage, and described the man and woman so that any one could have recognized the parties."

"Well, after the two months, Mrs. Englebert got the idea that something must have happened to her husband, for she wouldn't listen for a moment to the notion that he had deserted her. She was sure he wouldn't do such a thing!"

"Ah, I can see plainly that she is not the judge of human nature that you are!" the gentleman declared.

"Well, as he didn't come, and her money was about gone, she was forced to look for work, and the poor thing has had a hard time to get along, but, luckily for her, her husband bought her quite a lot of jewelry after they were married, three or four hundred dollars' worth, and

by pawning it, she managed to live with what little she earned.

"She looks for her husband to return every day, you know," the landlady added. "She has perfect faith he will come back—that is, if he is alive. That idea is what worries her. She is afraid that something has happened to him."

"Yes, but why doesn't she go to his employers, the men he travels for, and find out if they have heard anything about him. They would know whether he was alive or dead," the Englishman remarked.

"Bless your soul! she doesn't know who he worked for, or even what his business was!" the landlady exclaimed.

"She never asked him any questions and he never took the trouble to tell her anything; as I said, Mr. Rochester, she is too easy and simple altogether for her own good."

"That has a very suspicious look it seems to me, Miss Jones!" the gentleman declared with a grave shake of the head.

"Yes, of course it has! That is what I have thought all along. It isn't natural for a man to keep his business a secret from his wife, and the idea that he couldn't find time to write to her because he was traveling around is all nonsense. He could write easily enough if he wanted to!"

"Oh, yes, no doubt about that!"

"My opinion is that the old man became infatuated with the girl and married her in a hurry without thinking what he was doing. It is my impression, you know, that he was pretty well off, for he talked like a man who amounted to something. Then, after he had time to reflect upon the matter, he came to the conclusion he had made a mistake and resolved to take French leave."

"It is a very strange case! No idea at all about her husband's business?"

"No, only she has an opinion that it had something to do with railroads, and then she didn't know but what he had something to do with cattle, for once she heard him, when reading a paper, muttering about 'watering stock!'"

The Englishman laughed.

"That is a broker's term, and does not apply to animals. What was the full name of the husband?"

"Abraham Englebert!"

"Good gracious! I remember now!" the gentleman exclaimed, excitedly. "It all comes back to me. I know all about this woman's husband!"

CHAPTER X.

A STRANGE CONCLUSION.

"You do?" cried the landlady in amazement. "Yes, yes! Why, this is really marvelous! There is an old saying though that truth is stranger than fiction!" the Englishman declared.

"Well, I do hope that you will be able to bring some good luck to the poor girl, for the Lord knows she needs it badly enough!"

"I think that it is very possible I can, although I shall be obliged to shock her greatly in the beginning."

"Is that true?" exclaimed Miss Jones, greatly interested.

"Yes, I think so, if I have not made a mistake about the matter, and I don't think I have. Let me see!"

And with the word the gentleman produced a large wallet from an inside pocket of his coat, and when he opened it, Miss Jones, who was watching him with all the eyes in her head, saw that it was filled with newspaper clippings.

"I make a point when I see any remarkable story in the newspapers to cut it out and preserve it for reference," he explained.

Then he examined the clippings and selected one from the rest.

"You conversed with this Mr. Abraham Englebert?" he asked, as he unfolded the newspaper clippings.

"Yes."

And if you saw his picture do you think you would be apt to recognize it?"

"Oh, yes, surely!"

Mr. Rochester folded the newspaper scrap so that the lines at the head of it were concealed, and the portrait of an aged man, done in the sketchy way peculiar to the modern style of newspaper illustrating was prominently exposed.

"That is the man!" Miss Jones exclaimed in the most positive manner as soon as she caught sight of the picture.

"You are certain?"

"Yes, not a doubt of it! I would know him anywhere! He was a medium-sized man with a sandy-gray beard—had a foxy look, like a man whom it would be hard work to get ahead of."

"Do you read the newspapers?" the gentleman asked, abruptly.

"No, I never bother my head with such trash!" Miss Jones declared, in a disdainful way.

"You do not take any newspaper then?"

"No, I would not give the nasty things house room! all full of murders and scandal! I have no patience with them!"

"Does Mrs. Englebert read at all?"

"She takes a story paper, and buys novels, I believe."

"No daily, or weekly or Sunday paper?"

"I think not."

"That accounts for it then."

"Accounts for what? Has there been anything in the newspapers about her husband?" Miss Jones exclaimed.

"Indeed there has, unless it is one of the strangest cases of mistaken identity that ever was heard of!" the gentleman asserted.

"What is it? Do tell me all about it, for I am just dying with curiosity!" The landlady was getting excited.

"If there isn't any mistake about the matter the husband of your lodger was one of the most celebrated men in America; he was murdered about five months ago in the most mysterious manner, and he left an estate valued at over twenty millions of dollars."

This announcement for a few moments fairly took Miss Jones's breath away.

All she could do was to stare open-mouthed. Finally she managed to stammer:

"Well, I never!"

"Here is the account of the murder. I will read it to you."

The Englishman read the description of how Old Abe came to his death, while the landlady listened with breathless attention.

"If this don't beat anything that I ever heard tell of in all my born days!" Miss Jones declared.

"You see there was a good reason for his silence."

"It was just as I thought though!" the landlady exclaimed. "I knew there was something out of the way about the marriage."

"It is a question though whether the man meant to desert her or not," Mr. Rochester observed, thoughtfully. "For this newspaper account states that he was about to start on a trip on his new steam yacht and expected to be gone two months."

"That is just the time that he said!"

"I think that it is probable that if he had not been killed he would have come back to her on his return. It was evidently one of those infatuations which sometimes seize upon staid, old men of business. He acted honestly with the girl, and married her, although he had no intentions of allowing her to know who he really was—that is the station in life which he occupied. He gave his own name relying on the fact that no one in this neighborhood would be likely to know him."

"Of course no one would suspect that a man worth twenty millions would bring his wife to my poor little house, and be content with a three-dollar room room!" Miss Jones declared.

"And it is doubtful if the secret would have been discovered if I hadn't happened to stumble on it, just by accident."

"But I say, Mr. Rochester, will not this lady be entitled to a lot of money if she is the widow of this millionaire?" the landlady exclaimed.

"Well, yes, if she can succeed in proving that she is his widow."

"But I don't see how there can be any doubt about that!" Miss Jones exclaimed. "I can swear that the picture in the newspaper is the picture of the man who brought her here and said she was his wife, and told me to take care of her too, and then I know they were married all right, for I went to the minister's, as I told you."

"You will be a most valuable witness, indeed, for the lady!" the Englishman declared. "And I admit that I believe we have hit upon the truth, but I have no doubt it will take a hard fight to get the lady her rights, for the other heirs, the son and daughter of Englebert, will probably do all in their power to keep the money away from her."

"Yes, I know what rogues these lawyers are and how hard it is sometimes to get justice, but I think she ought to try for it, although, poor thing, I know that she hasn't got much money to pay lawyers."

"Well, really, Miss Jones, do you know I take such an interest in this strange case that I would not mind advancing a little money to help her along!" the Englishman declared, magnanimously. "I think she will win if she is afforded a fair chance and then she can pay me back—but perhaps she would not care to accept assistance from a stranger?" he added, as if the idea suddenly occurred to him.

"She would be very foolish indeed to refuse, but you need not trouble yourself about that, she is such a simple-hearted creature that I feel sure I can talk her into it."

"Well, if she comes in for her money she can thank you for it, for without your evidence I doubt if she would be able to do anything."

"Yes, it is very lucky for her, and it was just by accident that I happened to have any talk with the man."

"By the way, if the lady does conclude to make a struggle for her rights, let me caution you not to say anything to anybody about the matter, for it might make trouble. The people who have got the money will be apt to make a desperate fight, and it is not policy for us to allow them to know just what we can prove until we get ready for the struggle."

"Oh, I understand all about that!" Miss Jones exclaimed with a toss of the head. "I am no talker, you know, and I comprehend that when anybody gets into a lawsuit the less they have to say the better."

"Suppose we break the news to Mrs. Englebert and see what she thinks," the Englishman suggested.

"Well, I suppose she ought to know the truth as soon as possible, but I am afraid she will take on terribly."

"That will only be natural under the circumstances."

"Sit down and I will bring her; I will not be a moment!" the landlady declared and then she hastened away.

Mr. Rochester seated himself in the rocking-chair.

He had not long to wait, for in five minutes Miss Jones conducted the lodger into the parlor.

From the expression upon her face it was plain that the landlady had prepared her to receive bad news.

The Englishman showed her the picture in the paper, and she declared immediately that it was the portrait of her husband.

Then, as gently as possible, he told the story of Englebert's death.

As soon as she comprehended the truth the lady fainted dead away, and it was fully five minutes before she recovered, although Miss Jones and the Englishman did all in their power for her.

When she came to her senses she gave way to the most violent grief, but as the fiercest storm soonest exhausts itself, as the gentleman whispered to the landlady, she became calm after awhile, and was ready to discuss what ought to be done.

"You were his wife, and can prove it!" the landlady declared, "so you are entitled to a good share of his money, and if I were you I would surely try for it!"

"But I have no money to pay lawyers," the lady urged.

"That is all right!" Mr. Rochester exclaimed. "Don't allow that fact to worry you. I think you ought to have your rights, and I will advance you what money you need. If you win, you can pay me back, if you don't, why I will never trouble you about the debt."

Grateful tears stood in the lady's eyes as she thanked the Englishman for his generous offer.

"Now tell me all the particulars as to how you became acquainted with Mr. Englebert, and came to marry him."

The lady complied.

The tale was soon told, and when it was ended, Mr. Rochester expressed his conviction that Mrs. Englebert could not fail to establish her claim.

"I will put the case in the hands of the best lawyers in New York, to-morrow morning!" he declared, while the two ladies looked at him with eyes full of admiration.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CASE.

THE Englishman meant business, too, for early the next morning he called at the law-office of Have & Humpit, the well-known firm of criminal lawyers, who are by long odds the leaders in their peculiar line.

Mr. Rochester was in such a hurry that he arrived at the law-office a good half-hour before either of the eminent legal gentlemen put in an appearance, but when he explained to the clerk that he desired to see one of the members of the firm upon important legal business, his appearance and manners produced so good an impression upon the clerk that he begged him to take a chair and wait.

Counselor Have was the first to arrive, a portly, well-preserved gentleman, with a Jove-like front and "an eye like Mars, to threaten and command!"

Like the clerk, he was favorably impressed with Mr. Rochester's appearance, and invited him into his private office.

As soon as the pair were comfortably seated, the Englishman plunged at once into the business upon which he had come.

The lawyer listened to the story with amazement, not unmixed with unbelief.

"Do you not think that this is an amazing tale?" Mr. Rochester asked, in conclusion.

"Yes, very amazing, indeed," the lawyer replied, dryly, a peculiar smile upon his face.

"Excuse the question, but may I ask what interest you have in this matter?" the legal light continued.

"Well, really none at all, excepting that I happened by accident to learn the particulars, and made up my mind to do what I could to aid the lady to obtain her rights, going on the broad general principle, you know, that we humans are placed in this world to help one another."

"A very beautiful doctrine, but few people ever live up to it; if they did, there would not be so much work for us lawyers."

"I perceive, my dear sir, that, to use your American saying, you do not take 'much stock' in this story!"

"I will be frank with you and say that I do not, and if you had had as much experience with such affairs as I have had, you would understand why I do not."

"It is a very common thing when a man dies with a few millions, without leaving a will, for a lot of heirs to start up; people that neither the

man, his immediate relatives, nor his business associates ever heard of, and if the man happens to be a bachelor, or a widower, the chances are great that some woman will make her appearance and claim to have been secretly married to the party.

"The whole idea is that a compromise is expected; there are plenty of lawyers willing to take such cases for what they can get out of them, thinking the heirs would rather pay a few hundred dollars than go to the trouble of a contest. But I will say to you, right in the beginning, that I don't do business in that way. The reputation of our firm is such that we cannot afford to take part in any such suit."

"I cannot believe that there is anything crooked in this game, to use the common expression," the Englishman remarked. "These two women may be in a plot, but I doubt it, for how could it be possible for them to guess that I knew aught of the death of the millionaire? And I assure you, Mr. Have, the idea of asking you to take any chances in the matter is remote from my thoughts."

"I made some inquiries last night in regard to this matter, and, according to the information I received, the woman is entitled to three or four millions of dollars if she is the legal wife of Abraham Englebert."

The lawyer pursed up his lips and shook his head.

"Three or four millions of dollars is a pretty big sum of money!" he exclaimed.

"She is entitled to, and will get, every penny of that sum, if she is what I believe her to be!" Mr. Rochester declared, firmly.

"Now, Mr. Have, I want to say to you that I fully examined the facts in this matter with the calm, judicial eye of a judge before I came to the conclusion to champion the lady's cause, and as I feel satisfied that she can prove to the satisfaction of twelve good men and true that she is the widow of Abraham Englebert, I am willing to back her cause!"

Then the Englishman produced his pocket-book and counted out a hundred dollars, which he placed upon the table before the lawyer.

"There! is that enough for a retaining fee?" he inquired. "I want to show you that I mean business, as you Americans say."

"Oh, yes, that is quite enough, but—"

"I understand!" exclaimed the other. "You want to be a little certain of your ground before you go on."

"Yes, that is it," the lawyer replied. "There are so many of these cases that are merely dead-open-and-shut swindles that I would hate to get involved in one!"

"Could you spare an hour?" the Englishman asked. "In that time you can examine the ladies, see the minister in Harlem—I have obtained a good photograph of the dead money-king—and if we present the picture to the minister, with the question if he ever saw a man like the portrait, and he replies in the affirmative, and states that he married him, it seems to me that the evidence is pretty strong that the woman is really Abraham Englebert's widow."

The earnestness of the visitor produced an effect upon the lawyer.

"Well, really, I must say that your proposition is an extremely fair one."

"Then, too, the lady has in her possession a book upon the fly leaf of which her husband wrote a sentence. 'To my wife, from her affectionate husband,' and then signed his name, 'A. Englebert.'"

"It seems to me that if it can be proved that the writing is in the hand of the dead millionaire it will be very strong proof."

"Egad! I should say so!" the lawyer declared.

"But the only trouble about the matter is, as Shakespeare wrote, 'Methinks the lady doth protest too much!' You understand it looks like a cut-and-dried thing."

"Yes, yes, I comprehend, but to carry that out to a logical conclusion, it must follow that I, the two women, and the minister, are all engaged in a conspiracy, and such an unwieldy one would surely never hold together long enough to bear the severe inspection of a court of justice," the Englishman remarked.

"Well, it does not seem probable; but I will see if I can spare an hour."

Then the lawyer consulted the clerk, found that he could get off, and immediately departed with the visitor.

They took a coach and called at the lodging-house first, where the lawyer interviewed the two ladies, both of whom made a favorable impression upon him.

Then the pair were driven to the Elevated Road and took a train for Harlem.

On the way, Mr. Rochester asked the lawyer what opinion he had formed about the matter.

"My dear sir, I am under the impression that you have got a case!" the great legal light replied.

"The widow is quiet, lady-like, and on the witness-stand would, undoubtedly, make a good impression."

"She is evidently dazed by the novel position in which she finds herself so unexpectedly, and does not exactly know what to make of it, which is not astonishing, for the prospect of coming in for a fortune of two or three millions

of dollars to a woman who has hard work to get enough bread to eat is enough to take her breath away."

"I am pretty comfortably situated myself, manage to get my three square meals a day, you know," the lawyer continued. "But if a man should walk into my office and announce that there was a trifle of money like two or three millions in the bank, subject to my check, it would be apt to frustrate me a bit, although I am a pretty old stager."

"You see she is rather inclined to doubt the possibility of her getting so much money."

"Yes, she does not seem half so certain about the matter as that Miss Jones," Have observed.

"Aha! there is a jewel of a woman for you!" and the counselor rubbed his hands gleefully together. "Right up and down! Business from the word, go! The lawyer who tries to bother her with a cross-examination on the witness-stand will have a tough job."

"You think that she is honest?"

"As honest as the day! As good as wheat!" the legal light declared.

"Well, that was my impression."

"Yes, sir! I do not believe there is money enough in this world to induce that woman to go on the witness-stand and swear to a lie!"

"That is something, sir, that it would be utterly impossible for her to do!"

"Oh, yes, she is honest," the lawyer continued.

"You and Mrs. Englebert, and the minister may be in a plot," and the legal light assumed a jocular tone. "But you will never succeed in ringing Miss Jones in."

The counselor felt extremely good-natured. The women had made an excellent impression on him, and—in his "mind's eye, Horatio" as the lawyer would have been apt to remark—being a great theater-goer, he was very strong on quotations—he thought he saw an opportunity to get a good "stake" out of the three millions, if he succeeded in making good the claim of the supposed widow.

But the vital point, as he remarked to the Englishman, was the minister's evidence.

"Miss Jones's statement seemed to imply that that is all right," Mr. Rochester remarked.

"Yes, but the identity question is the point!" the lawyer declared.

The minister stood the test as completely as the women.

He recognized the photograph immediately, and in his broken English gave the name of the original.

There was no doubt in his mind about the matter; he had married the gentleman, just as the lady had declared, and was prepared to swear to it.

And when Lawyer Have told him the gentleman was dead and expressed his surprise that he had not read about it in the newspapers, the minister's reply was that he never read anything but German weekly newspapers published in the old country.

"Well, what do you think?" Mr. Rochester asked, after they left the minister's humble abode.

"My dear sir, there is very little doubt in my mind that the woman will get a good slice in the Englebert estate. In fact, I doubt if any fight will be made when the heirs see how strong a case I have!" the counselor declared.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CONTEST BEGINS.

THE counselor was a man who believed, that "when 'tis done, 'twere well it were done quickly," and so after he got his points well in hand he made bold to call upon Maurice Englebert.

He selected an evening, thinking he would be more likely to find the young man at home.

Sending in his card, with a line penciled upon it that he came upon important business, he was shown to the library, where young Englebert awaited him.

The lawyer came at once to business and told his tale, which was received in the most contemptuous manner by Maurice.

He knew the counselor by reputation, and made the mistake of thinking he was only a common police-court lawyer, and the story that his father had been secretly married and left a widow he regarded as a fable utterly unworthy of belief.

"How much do you expect to make out of this romance?" he inquired in a way that aroused the lawyer's anger at once, for the counselor was not a patient man, and always made it a rule when assaulted to give as good as he got.

"Well, that depends upon the amount of the estate," he replied, quite smoothly, curbing his temper. "You ought to know in regard to that matter better than myself, but, judging from common report, about five millions of dollars would be the figure, I think."

"Five millions of devils!" Maurice exclaimed, angrily.

"Oh, no, you can keep the devils and we will take the dollars!"

"You must be crazy to come to me with any cock-and-bull story of this kind."

The lawyer rose to his feet with the ponderous dignity which always made so great an impression on the average jurymen.

"You had better give me the name of your

lawyers, young man, so I can serve the proper legal notice," he remarked. "It is evident that it would be only a waste of time for a gentleman to attempt to talk to you."

"I took the trouble to call, because as this is a family matter I thought you would prefer to keep it quiet, but it is apparent that I have made a mistake."

"Oh, I understand your game!" the young man cried, angry at being thus put in the wrong. "You came to see me because you thought that I would give you a few hundred dollars to hush this matter up!"

Now this was so supremely ridiculous that despite his anger the old lawyer could not help laughing in the face of the young man.

"Upon my word! this is really too rich!" he exclaimed. "Where in heaven's name have you lived, young man, that you don't know better than that?"

"A few hundred dollars! My dear sir, if you were to offer me a check for a million this moment in settlement I would refuse it on the instant!"

For the first time the idea came to young Englebert that there might be something in this affair.

"My lawyers are Archibald, Douglass and Douglass," he replied in a changed tone. "You had better see them if there is really anything in this business, for I don't care to talk about it."

"Thank you, sir, I will send a communication to them!" and the counselor bowed with stately dignity. "But if you do not discover before you are a month older that there is something in this matter worthy of attention, then I do not know as much as I think I do," and after this shot the lawyer retreated.

Doctor Mairstone happening to come in just after the counselor departed young Englebert spoke to him about the matter, and the doctor took the alarm at once.

"You will excuse me for saying it, but I think you made a mistake in not ascertaining what he wanted," Mairstone remarked. "This man is no common lawyer, and he would not trouble himself about the matter unless he was satisfied it was of importance."

"But the idea that my father was secretly married is so utterly ridiculous!" Maurice declared.

"Men do queer things sometimes," the doctor rejoined. "I am aware that it does not look probable, but such things do happen sometimes."

"Well, you can look into the matter and see what there is to it."

"If it is the truth—if this woman is your father's widow, and the proof is so strong that she must win if it comes to a trial, it seems to me that it would be wiser to settle the matter than to engage in a lawsuit, which will only cost money without being productive of any results."

"Yes, I suppose that is the truth," the young man admitted, after thinking the matter over for a few minutes.

"I presume this lawyer figured the matter out in that way, and that is why he took the trouble to call upon me."

"Possibly I acted a little foolishly in not being willing to listen to what he had to say."

"Well, it would not have done any harm," the doctor remarked.

"You take charge of the matter for me and do as you think best about it," Maurice said. "I know I can rely upon your judgment."

"I will do my best, you can depend upon that!" Mairstone declared, and then he suggested that young Englebert should write a note authorizing him to take charge of the affair.

"That will show this gentleman as well as Archibald, Douglass and Douglass that you have put the matter into my hands."

"You Scotchmen are always cautious," Maurice observed with a laugh as he wrote the letter.

"I think that it is best to have matters arranged so that there cannot be any misunderstanding," the doctor observed.

After getting the letter, Mairstone went to his own apartments, and there he meditated upon the situation.

"It is very odd," he murmured. "Abraham Englebert was about the last man in the world whom I would have believed could be capable of contracting a secret marriage; still, these hard, iron-like men do such foolish things sometimes."

"There is something in the matter, I am satisfied, or else this lawyer would never have taken hold of it, for he stands high in his profession, and is not the kind of man to concern himself with any black-mail affairs."

Then a sudden idea came to the doctor.

He would consult Joe Phenix, for the acute detective would be certain to give good advice.

Possessing the address of the detective he determined to call upon him at once, thinking he would be apt to catch him before he went out for the evening.

Joe Phenix listened attentively while Doctor Mairstone told his story.

"It is a strange case," he remarked when the tale was ended. "And you are right in thinking that there must be something in the case or else Have would not be interested in it."

"Now let me see, Englebert has authorized you to attend to the matter?"

"He has; I got him to write a letter to that effect."

"That was correct! There is nothing like proceeding by rule in all such cases," the detective remarked.

"The first point is to ascertain just what there is to the case, and I do not think that will be a hard matter, for the lawyer is evidently disposed to show his hand, and that is a sure sign he considers he holds winning cards, or else he would not be willing to allow anybody to know what game he is going to play," said the doctor.

"He came with the evident intention of talking the matter over, and young Englebert made a great mistake in not listening to him; but as he doesn't possess any more sense than the law allows I do not wonder at his action," the detective remarked.

"I am well-acquainted with Have, as I have been brought in contact with him in a professional way a half-a-dozen times.

"He is a fighter, and does the best he can for his clients, but is a man of sense and one with whom it is easy to do business."

"How would you advise me to proceed?"

"See Archibald, Douglass and Douglass first; show them your letter from Englebert, explain about Have's visit to the young man, and say that Englebert and yourself have come to the conclusion that it will not do any harm for you to call upon the lawyer and see just what there is in the case.

"I would like to go myself, but as Have knows me it would not do, for if there is anything crooked in the affair my appearance would put the parties on their guard; the lawyer knows me well enough to understand that if I became interested in the matter I would do my best to get to the bottom of it as speedily as possible, but you are not known as a bloodhound, and the chances are that even so able a man as Have will not suspect that you have gone in for war right at the beginning."

"I understand: our purpose is to learn all we can in regard to this claim and then set an inquiry on foot to see what there is in it."

"Exactly!" the detective replied. "I think from the way the lawyer has begun he is of the opinion he has so strong a case that there will not be any contest when the particulars become known."

"Yes, I see," the doctor remarked, thoughtfully. "Our game is to appear willing to agree to a compromise if his case is a strong one."

"That is it. Mind you, if there is anything crooked about this matter it is almost certain that the lawyer does not know anything about it, for if he did he would not touch it. I know him well enough to be aware of that. He is not the kind of man to be a party to any swindle.

"If the game be a crooked one the conspirators have arranged it with so much care that he has been deceived into the belief that it is all right, and being confident in regard to that, he does not fear an investigation."

"I will do my best to learn all the points," the doctor declared.

"And as the quicker I get at the thing the better, come to the Astor House the moment you get through with the lawyer. I will take a room there under the name of Black, and that little arrangement will bother any shadow if one is placed upon your footsteps."

The doctor said he would come, and then departed.

"At last a move is made!" Joe Phenix declared, exultingly. "I have been expecting it and now it comes!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAWYER'S STATEMENT.

As Dr. Mairstone had transacted considerable business with the legal firm that looked after Englebert's interests, he knew that he would find one of the partners in the office as early as nine in the morning, so at that hour he paid them a visit.

As it happened the two senior partners had arrived, and they were amazed when the doctor related the particulars of the lawyer's visit.

It seemed to be incredible, one declared, but the old head of the firm, the veteran Archibald, shook his head gravely; and his opinion, given in the cautious way for which he was noted, was exactly the same as the acute detective's.

Counselor Have would not have taken the case if he had not been satisfied that there was something in it.

When the doctor announced that it was his intention to call upon the lawyer, for the purpose of talking the matter over, the pair expressed their opinion that it was a good idea.

"If the gentleman has what he considers to be a strong case he will, undoubtedly, give you the particulars, for an affair of this kind is not like a regular lawsuit," Archibald remarked.

"Such matters are always better settled outside of a court. If the woman's claim is a just

one, it would be much better for Mr. Englebert to compromise the matter than to force the party to bring suit.

"Unsavory cases of this kind are much better kept quit. I suppose Mr. Englebert understands the position of our house?" the old gentleman hastened to remark. "Under no consideration could we have aught to do with the matter, for it is entirely out of our line."

"I presume he understands it. At all events I will explain the matter to him, if he does not," Dr. Mairstone replied.

Then he took his departure, and went directly to Counselor Have's office.

That legal gentleman was in his private room, having just arrived, and was looking over the morning paper.

The doctor came at once to business.

"My name is Mairstone, and I am Mr. Maurice Englebert's confidential man of business," he announced.

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Mairstone," the lawyer declared, rising and shaking hands with the gentleman in the warmest manner.

The counselor was favorably impressed by the appearance of the doctor.

"Have the kindness to be seated," and then as Mairstone sat down, the lawyer continued:

"This visit is something of a surprise, for the interview which I had last night with Mr. Englebert was of so unsatisfactory a nature that I did not expect to hear from him except through his lawyers."

"I presume you are not acquainted with Mr. Maurice Englebert?"

"I never met the gentleman until last night; his father, though, I knew well. A perfect giant of a man, my dear sir, mentally, if not physically."

"In regard to business capabilities, the son does not take after the father."

"Yes, I have heard as much, and judging from my brief and extremely unsatisfactory interview with him last night, I think the report is true.

"Of course I am aware that I put myself in the way of being snubbed. I have no one to thank for it but myself; it isn't often, though, that I make such a mistake, and if the case had not been a peculiar one, I should not have troubled myself to go out of my way, but that is what a man gets by doing a good-natured action.

"It is almost enough to make a man swear that he will never put himself out again for anybody."

"Unfortunately, young Mr. Englebert is not a business man," the doctor remarked. "But as soon as he spoke to me about the matter, I told him it was my opinion he had made a mistake in not listening to what you had to say."

"A man never loses anything by being a good listener," the lawyer remarked.

"So he put the matter in my hands. You will see by this letter that I have full power."

The lawyer perused the letter which the other tendered him, then returned it, saying:

"Ah, yes, I see; well, sir, I am pleased that Mr. Englebert has come to the conclusion to act like a sensible man in this matter. I thought that my reputation as a lawyer in this city was such that when I approached a man in regard to a case of this kind he would understand that the visit meant business, but your principal seemed to have got the idea into his head that I was a common pettifogger, to whom a hundred dollars would seem to be a fortune."

"I understand your position, Mr. Have, and when Mr. Englebert told me the nature of your communication, I informed him immediately that it was my opinion he would make a great mistake if he did not discuss the matter with you, and settle the affair without going to the trouble of a suit."

"That was my idea," the lawyer replied. "But the moment I explained my business I could see that Mr. Englebert had got the idea that I was a common sort of a rascal who had come with the expectation of being able to bulldoze him out of a few dirty dollars!" and the counselor's voice was full of indignation as he spoke.

"As I explained to you, Mr. Englebert is no business man, or he never would have been guilty of making such a mistake!" the doctor declared.

"I understand your position; I know that a man of your reputation would not take a case of this kind without feeling sure that there was merit in it."

"Exactly! and the sole reason why I waited upon Mr. Englebert was to save trouble. I thought that the young man would prefer to keep the matter quiet, and not allow the world at large to know that his father had become infatuated with a poor girl in his old age."

"He jumped at once to the conclusion that there wasn't any truth in the story."

"If he had had the patience to listen to the tale I think I could have convinced him to the contrary!" the lawyer declared.

"Well, I am here for the purpose of looking into the matter," the doctor remarked.

"That is what I want!" the lawyer declared. "This is a delicate matter and, in my

opinion, should be settled outside of a law court."

"If the woman's claim is just—if she is the widow of Abraham Englebert, most decidedly then some arrangement ought to be made," Mairstone said in a very decided way.

"My dear sir, I am glad to see that you take this view of the matter," the counselor remarked, rubbing his hands together softly, a way he had when he was pleased.

"Holding this opinion renders it possible for me to talk to you in the freest and frankest manner," the lawyer continued.

"That is what I want and you can depend upon my being equally as frank with you."

"I am aware that in all cases of this kind—where after the death of a very wealthy man a woman appears who claims to be secretly married to him, it is but natural that such a statement should be regarded with suspicion. In fact, I do not think I exaggerate when I say that in nine cases out of ten the woman is a fraud and the story a bare-faced lie got up for the express purpose of extorting money from the heirs of the dead man."

"Yes, I should judge from what I have heard of such matters that your statement is correct."

"Long experience satisfies me that it is, but because nine are impostors it does not follow that the tenth is also a fraud."

"The probabilities are against it."

"Now, in this case, as soon it was brought to my notice, I assumed a wise look. 'Oh no,' I exclaimed, 'not for Joe! I understand all about little games of this kind and you will have to excuse me from taking a hand.'"

"I do not wonder at your incredulity!" the doctor exclaimed.

"But the party was persistent and urged me at least to look into the matter. If I was not satisfied that everything was square, and above-board, I need not take the case. Thus persuaded, I listened to the tale, which though odd was not improbable.

"The impression made was a favorable one. I took pains to personally examine the claimant and all her witnesses, and if she has not got a strong case then my judgment as a lawyer is worthless."

"No one that knows you could possibly come to that conclusion, Mr. Have!" Doctor Mairstone exclaimed.

"Much obliged to you, sir, for your good opinion," responded the lawyer with a courtly bow.

"Now I feel so sure of my ground in this case that I am going to relate all the particulars to you—give you a chance to examine the claimant, and her witnesses, just as I did, and when you get through with your examination if you are not satisfied that it is a case which ought to be settled outside of a court-room then either your judgment or mine is at fault."

"I shall be pleased to look into the matter," the doctor remarked.

"First we will take up the lady's story," and as the lawyer spoke he went to his safe and produced a large envelope containing some folded papers which had an extremely legal look.

He selected one, unfolded it and began:

"The maiden name of the plaintiff is Martha Green, born in London, England in 1865, so she is now a little over twenty years old. Came to this country about eight months ago, expecting to get a situation as governess. Was unsuccessful, and in a couple of months, her money being exhausted, she was reduced to a state of despair, and went forth one evening with the firm intention of throwing herself into the river."

"She came to Broadway, it was almost ten o'clock at night.

"A gentleman, a little way in the advance of her, pulled a letter from his pocket in taking out a newspaper.

"The lady saw it fall, secured it, and overtaking the gentleman informed him of his loss.

"The letter was a most important business document and he declared he would not have been willing to have lost it for a thousand dollars."

"Then, noticing that the lady was poorly dressed he asked her if she would be offended if he tendered her a reward.

"The idea of taking money for such a simple service was repugnant to her, particularly as she jumped to the conclusion that it was tendered more out of charity, on account of her being rather shabbily dressed—she had been obliged to pawn everything upon which she could raise any money—than because the gentleman thought the act was worthy of a reward."

"She replied that she would rather not take anything, and then with that inspiration born of genius, which often comes to quick-witted women, she added that as she needed employment badly she would be deeply thankful if the gentleman could aid her to obtain any honest work whereby she could keep body and soul together."

"The stranger replied that he would be very glad indeed to be of assistance, and pressed her to relate to him how it was that she came to be in so bad a plight."

"So the two walked on together while Miss Green told her story."

"The gentleman expressed his deep sympathy and insisted upon her taking ten dollars, as a loan he explained, which would enable her to get along until he could find something for her to do.

"He explained that he was a business man with a host of acquaintances and there wasn't any doubt he could obtain a pleasant and lucrative position for her.

"She gave him her address, and he came to see her the very next day; the nature of his attentions could not be mistaken; he had fallen in love with her, but as he treated her in the most respectful manner this fact did not cause her any alarm; on the contrary her womanly vanity was pleased, and when after a week or so he got her to go for a walk one evening and took her for a ride on the Elevated Road to Harlem, and while on the trip proposed that they should get married right away, she was persuaded by him to consent; a minister was hunted up and the pair joined in wedlock.

"The reason the gentleman gave for haste was that he would be obliged to leave the city on a business trip in a couple of weeks, and he was anxious to make her his wife before he went away.

"After the marriage he took his wife to a small hotel on the Bowery conducted on the European style, where he engaged a room.

"He was only at the hotel during a few hours in the evening, arriving after dark and going away about eleven o'clock.

"The wife, simple and unsuspecting, believed that he told her the truth when he explained that he was very busy preparing for his trip, and had to be at his place of business so early in the morning that it would not be possible for him to be on time unless he had a sleeping apartment in the immediate neighborhood.

"After a week or so the husband suggested that it would be a good idea to take a furnished room in some quiet neighborhood where she would be much more comfortable during his absence than at a hotel.

The room was taken, and in another week the husband departed.

"He never returned, nor did the wife hear from him. He told her that he would be gone for about two months, and left a good sum of money for her support.

"When that was gone she sought work. The mistress of the house believed that her husband had deserted her, but the wife had faith in the man and feared some accident had befallen him.

"Month after month passed and then, just by accident, a man took a room in the house who was acquainted with Abraham Englebert, and the moment he saw the wife he was sure he had seen her before somewhere, so he inquired, out of pure curiosity, in regard to her, and when he heard her story he remembered where he had seen her.

"This man was a stranger in the country, an Englishman who was making a tour of America with the idea of writing a book about the country, so he had made it a point to see all the places of interest; he had not neglected a visit to Wall street, and the millionaire, Abraham Englebert, had been pointed out to him as one of the kings of the money market.

"Two nights after, when inspecting the sights of the Bowery by gas-light, he saw the great money-maker with a lady on his arm, and wondering to see such a man in such a street, and at such a time, he took particular notice of the lady who was with him, so when he saw her again he recognized her."

"That seems to be strong evidence that the pair were acquainted, but, of course, it does not prove they were husband and wife," the doctor remarked, thoughtfully.

"I am aware of that; it is only point number one, as you might say.

"All that there is to the Englishman's evidence, apparently is, he knew Englebert by sight—he saw Englebert and the woman, who claims to be his wife, together on the public street arm and arm.

"As far as proof in regard to the marriage goes the Englishman's evidence does not amount to much; but for his accidental meeting with the stranger it is probable that she never would have discovered that her husband was the great money-king, so that as far as the woman is concerned the Englishman has proved of the highest importance to her."

"Yes, I see."

"Now we come to the mistress of the lodging-house," the lawyer continued. "She did not know the great Wall street man from a side of sole-leather, to use the popular saying.

"All she can swear to is that a man who called himself Abraham Englebert took a room in her house for himself and his wife, and when he went away he told her to take good care of his wife.

"The landlady was not a newspaper reader, had never heard of the millionaire, whose name was in the public journals so often, and when the news of his mysterious death created such an excitement in the city the intelligence did not reach her ears.

"When the lodger's husband did not return, though, and no word came from him, her suspi-

cions were excited, and she paid a visit to the minister in Harlem to see if the pair were really married.

"That isn't evidence, you know, because we have the minister to speak for himself."

The doctor nodded.

"Now the vital point in regard to this woman's testimony is, how can she testify that the Abraham Englebert who engaged a room in her house for himself and wife is the Abraham Englebert who left so great an estate?"

"Yes, that is an important point."

"We connect the two and prove that they were one by means of a photograph of the money-king.

"The woman is prepared to go on the witness-stand and swear that the picture of the millionaire, Abraham Englebert, is the likeness of the man who had the room in her house and introduced the woman to her as his wife."

"That certainly is strong evidence, yet it is not impossible that the woman may be mistaken in regard to this matter," the doctor observed. "She may believe that she is swearing to the truth while she is not. Photographs are sometimes deceptive, and it is not always easy to identify a man by means of a picture."

"Very true, and that you see is where the Englishman's evidence comes in strong, for he brings the two together, for according to his testimony the Abraham Englebert who was with the woman was the great money-king."

"Yes, I see."

"Now we come to the testimony of the minister, and the two members of his household who acted as witnesses to the marriage.

"The three identify the man by the photograph and swear that the marriage took place as the woman claims."

"It certainly does seem to be a strong case," Mairstone admitted, greatly puzzled by the developments, for it did not appear to be possible to him that the hard-headed, sagacious, wily old money-maker could be so foolish as to indulge in a secret marriage of this sort at his time of life.

"And now I will show you where in his own handwriting Abraham Englebert acknowledges that this woman is his wife," the lawyer declared. "That is, I will be able to show you if you are familiar with his handwriting," Counselor Have added. "If you are not, why the writing will be no proof."

"I am familiar with his writing," the doctor observed. "He wrote a clear, legible hand, and from some peculiarities about it I think I would be able to recognize his handwriting without any trouble."

The lawyer went to the safe and brought back a book.

It was a small volume bound in morocco, and contained Scott's poem of "The Lady of the Lake."

The lawyer opened it and called Mairstone's attention to an inscription on the first blank page.

"To my wife, from her affectionate husband, A. Englebert," said the doctor, reading the writing aloud.

"Well, what do you think of that?" the counselor demanded, a note of triumph in his voice. "Was that line written by Abraham Englebert or not?"

"Upon my word, Mr. Have, if I was upon the witness stand I am afraid I should be obliged to declare that he surely wrote the words."

"Well, sir, there is the case!" Have exclaimed in a tone which seemed to say, "dispute it if you can!"

Mairstone remained silent for a few moments, meditating over the matter.

There was no disguising the fact that this was a serious affair. As far as Mairstone could see there wasn't a weak point all along the line.

"I am afraid this matter is a little too deep for me," he observed at last. "If I understand you aright, you are willing that I shall have a talk with these witnesses."

"Certainly! for I know that if you examine into the matter you will soon be convinced that this widow is what she represents herself to be."

"Suppose I delegate the examination to one of the legal gentlemen attached to Archibald, Douglass and Douglass, for I see that this is out of my line?"

"That will be satisfactory to me. I do not fear the inspection of the keenest lawyer in New York!" Counselor Have declared.

"Very well, if you will send the necessary data to Archibald, Douglass and Douglass I will have them attend to the matter."

This the lawyer agreed to do, and then the doctor took his departure, much perplexed.

CHAPTER XIV.

SHADOWED.

DOCTOR MAIRSTONE was in a "brown study," as that peculiar form of abstraction is termed, when he left the lawyer's office.

The more he reflected upon the matter the greater became the puzzle.

The evidence that the money-king had contrasted a secret marriage a short time before his death was so strong that it was no wonder the lawyer felt sure of winning the case.

The doctor tried to put himself in the position of a judge, and attempted to examine the matter as a stranger who was not acquainted with any of the parties would do.

"There is no use of attempting to deny the truth!" he exclaimed after carefully reflecting upon all the facts of the affair. "The woman certainly has a strong case, and if the evidence is as the lawyer states—and there is little doubt he has put matters exactly as he understands them to be—there is not one man out of a hundred who would not decide that the woman is really Abraham Englebert's widow."

"If there is any fraud about the matter, it is so carefully covered up that I am not able to discover the slightest trace of it."

The doctor had gone up the side street toward Broadway, after leaving the lawyer's office, and by the time he had come to this conclusion he had reached the main avenue.

"I will consult Phenix," Mairstone muttered, as he turned into Broadway. "He is used to dealing with these difficult, complex matters, and although, as far as I can see, the affair seems to be all right—no peg to hang suspicion on—yet he may be able to see some rays of light amid the darkness."

After coming to this determination, Mairstone went straight to the Astor House, and proceeded to the office, for the purpose of examining the register, that he might discover the room which the veteran detective had taken under an assumed name.

There were a couple of gentlemen registering as the doctor approached, conversing with the clerk in regard to rooms, so he was compelled to wait for a chance to examine the book.

And while Mairstone waited he happened to glance around him.

It was a careless, aimless action; there wasn't anybody in the neighborhood in whom he expected to take any interest, but as he turned abruptly around, his gaze encountered that of a well-dressed gentleman, with a dark, foreign-looking face, who was right at the doctor's elbow.

The man moved to one side as though he expected Mairstone was going to retreat from the counter, and then after a moment's pause, he proceeded to the other side of the office, and busied himself in reading some placards affixed to the wall.

There was something in the man's face—a peculiar look in his eyes, which immediately aroused the doctor's suspicion; but he was cunning enough not to betray by his face, nor by any movement, that he had noticed the man.

He glanced around carelessly, as though without any well-defined purpose, and then turned his attention to the counter again.

"Ho, ho!" muttered the doctor, under his breath, "it strikes me very forcibly that this fellow is shadowing me, to use the term common to the detectives."

"I think I understand the game. Somebody knows that I am in the Englebert household, and a watch being kept upon the lawyer's office my visit there was noticed, and the conclusion was natural that I had come to confer with the counselor in regard to the case."

"Now, the spy has been placed upon me in order to see what steps I am about to take."

"How extremely lucky that I happened to notice the man, for if I had not, the chances are great that the fact that I am in communication with Joe Phenix would have been discovered, and that might have materially interfered with the detective's plans for getting at the bottom of this mystery."

And now that Doctor Mairstone was satisfied that he was watched he set his wits to work to baffle the spy.

The gentlemen moved to one side and afforded him a chance to examine the register.

He speedily discovered the name which the detective had told him to look for, and noted the number of the room so he would be able to find it without having to consult the book again, but in order to deceive the spy, who was now again at his elbow, apparently waiting for a chance to examine the register, the doctor affected to be looking for a name which he could not find.

He turned over the page and examined the list of arrivals for the preceding day, then he turned to the hotel clerk and said in a perplexed way:

"I beg your pardon, I thought to find Mr. James Carlyle of Toronto, Canada. He wrote me that he expected to arrive either last night or this morning."

"No such gentleman here yet," the clerk replied.

"Could you tell me if he has written asking that a room be reserved for him?"

"No, sir, he has not written."

Then the clerk's attention was claimed by a guest, and he turned away.

The doctor shook his head, as though puzzled, and left the hotel.

"I will go to the lawyer's office and chat there awhile," he muttered as he descended the stairs. "then if my shadow is still on the track I will devise some plan to give him the slip so I can have an interview with Joe Phenix, and no one will be the wiser for it."

Straight to the office of Archibald, Douglass and Douglass he proceeded.

They had rooms in a corner building, one of the modern office palaces on lower Broadway.

There were two entrances: one on Broadway another on the side street, and as the ground sloped from Broadway the side entrance was a story lower down than the main door.

The elevator started from the basement, and Doctor Mairstone, going in at the Broadway entrance, entered the elevator as it rose to the first floor.

The doctor had his wits about him. He was anxious to see if he was followed, yet very desirous not to give the spy cause to suspect that he had any suspicions that a watch was placed upon him, so as he entered the building he took a sly glance over his shoulder.

As he expected the foreign-looking gentleman was in the crowd coming down Broadway, some twenty paces away.

The doctor was just in time to catch the elevator, and after he entered the "lift" an idea came to him by means of which he might throw the spy off the track.

The man would undoubtedly take a position on the first floor so that he would be able to watch both the stairs and the elevator, but as he would not expect to see him return under fifteen or twenty minutes at the least it was possible that he would not go promptly on guard.

There were two elevators, running side by side, so Doctor Mairstone got off on the second floor, caught the other elevator coming down, and soon was landed in the basement, from whence he made his way out of the building by the side door without seeing anything of the spy.

"I have eluded him!" Mairstone cried in triumph.

CHAPTER XV.

GETTING AT THE TRUTH.

AFTER the doctor got a block down the street, entangled in the hurrying crowd, he felt satisfied that he had not made any mistake in believing he had given the spy the slip, and he chuckled as he reflected what a wait the shadow would have, cooling his heels in the corridor on the alert to mark his descent.

The doctor proceeded to the Astor House, but took the trouble to double twice on his track on the way thither so as to make sure that he had succeeded in outwitting the spy.

There seemed to be no doubt of this though, for he did not catch sight of the foreign-looking individual again, nor did he see any other suspicious-appearing party.

When he arrived at the Astor House, Mairstone went directly to the room occupied by the detective.

Joe Phenix was in waiting, and listened attentively while Doctor Mairstone related the particulars of his interview with the lawyer, and then described how he believed he had been watched, relating how he had succeeded in throwing the shadow off the track.

"You have done well, doctor, and I believe you must have a natural talent for this sort of business," Joe Phenix remarked, jocosely.

"It was just mere accident," the doctor observed. "That is, as far as the spy was concerned, for I had no notion that any game of the kind would be tried, and so I was not on the watch for it."

"If conscious guilt hadn't shown out of the fellow's eyes I should never have suspected that he was troubling his head about me."

"There isn't any doubt that your suspicions in regard to the matter are correct; you were shadowed," the veteran thief-taker remarked.

"And that fact argues that although everything about this matter appears to be all right, yet there is a colored gentleman in the wood-pile, somewhere."

"I understand the inference you draw," Mairstone observed, thoughtfully. "If all was honest about the affair no one would think of employing a spy."

"Exactly! that is the point."

"Yet, really, this lawyer talked as if he thought everything was all right," the doctor urged.

"Oh, he is square enough!" Joe Phenix declared. "I know Counselor Have of old; he is a good lawyer and will use all sorts of sharp tricks to win a case for a client, but I feel pretty certain that he would not descend to any underhand work."

"He has been deceived by the parties who have arranged this game, and I do not wonder at it, for even an old, experienced man-hunter like myself, who has spent years in ferreting out just such plots, am not able to find a weak point in the story, except by inference."

"I admit that as far as I can see the woman seems to have a remarkably strong case."

"Yes, it does look strong!" the detective declared. "Not a link in the chain, apparently, which will not bear testing."

"Counselor Have is a shrewd, able man, as good a lawyer as there is in the city, and in a case of this kind he is far better calculated to decide in regard to the merits of it than any of the high-toned lawyers, who make thousands where he makes hundreds; yet I am egotistical enough to say, right here at the beginning, that

I am satisfied this story is a fraud from beginning to end, and now, before I proceed further in the matter, I will say that I think the woman has no more claim to any of the Englebert money than I have!"

"That is a bold statement," the doctor observed, with a shake of the head. "But I know you well enough to understand that you know what you are talking about, and you must have some ground to go on or else you would not make the declaration."

"Well, in this matter I am acting on the instinct which comes from long experience," the detective observed.

"It is in the same line with the apparently wonderful work which the Indian warriors and the white scouts are able to perform in the pathless wilderness."

"From signs which to their eyes are perfectly plain, and yet totally invisible to those who are not trained in woodcraft, they are able to tell who has passed over the ground, whether mounted or on foot, and often able to decide to within a few minutes of the time which has elapsed since the track was made."

"Yes, I have read of such things, and it seems almost marvelous until the circumstances are explained, and then it is plain that the results are due to the cultivation of certain natural powers."

"That is the idea! It is like your profession, doctor," the detective observed. "A patient tells you his symptoms and from them your knowledge enables you to guess what is the matter with the sufferer and to prescribe a cure."

"Now in this case, I have not thought the matter over—have not attempted to make a searching examination of each particular part, yet there is something about the affair which convinces me, before I begin to make my examinations at all, that it is a deep-laid plot!"

"I comprehend how you arrived at the conclusion although not sufficiently posted in your profession to understand how you get at it."

"I will take the case by detail," the detective said, in his quiet, methodical way.

"In the first place, the employment of a spy to shadow you shows that there is something crooked about the affair. Honest people do not go to work in that fashion."

"That is certainly true!" Doctor Mairstone declared, struck by the force of the reasoning.

"Yes, no doubt about that point."

"It was known that an agent was expected by the lawyer from Englebert. After his interview with the young man, although it was apparently so unsatisfactory, yet the calculation was made that after Englebert had time to reflect over the matter he would be likely to send some one to see just what the affair amounted to."

"The parties were anxious to see what kind of an agent would come, for from the style of the man they could form some idea of how the game was going."

"If a man of my stamp, a detective, came, then it would be certain that the young man not only intended to fight, but suspecting that there was something crooked about the affair, had made up his mind to be as ugly as possible."

"Yes, I see."

"If the party was from Archibald, Douglass and Douglass, then the natural surmise would be that a legal contest might be expected."

"That is true."

"But when you came—an inmate of the Englebert mansion—young Englebert's confidential man of business—then the inference might be fairly drawn that the young man was wavering in his mind about the matter and that there was a good chance for a compromise."

"It seems to me that these conclusions are all fairly drawn," Doctor Mairstone remarked reflectively.

"You were watched after leaving the lawyer's office, for the parties were anxious to see who you would consult about the matter."

"If the shadow had succeeded in discovering that you were in communication with me, then they would have been at once placed upon their guard and the task of hunting down the getters up of the game would have been indeed much more difficult."

"Well, I have not had much experience in this kind of business, you know," the doctor remarked. "But the moment I suspected that a spy was on my track I understood that it was extremely necessary for the success of your plans that he should not get at the knowledge that I was in consultation with you."

"You acted very prudently indeed," the detective remarked, approvingly. "And now that I have explained to you why the employment of this spy suggests that there is crookedness at the bottom of the affair, I will proceed to see what I can make of this array of proof."

"The way I arrange a thing of this kind is—first, the motive!"

"That is perfectly plain; there is a million or so of dollars which can be gained if the trick works successfully; the biggest stake, about, that I ever knew to be played for, and with such a prize in view it is not a wonder that the parties are putting up a great game."

"Yes, the stake is a great one, and it, most certainly, is a colossal scheme."

"Very true; the largest and the boldest that I have heard of in all my experience!" the detective declared.

"Now, I will commence right at the beginning. My way of getting at a game of this kind is to plan out in my own mind how I would work if I had any such scheme to carry out."

The doctor nodded; the idea struck him as being a good one.

"I will go back to the death of Abraham Englebert."

Doctor Mairstone looked surprised.

"It is my idea that he was murdered for the express purpose of allowing this woman to come forward and claim to be his widow."

Mairstone was struck by surprise, for this was totally unexpected.

"My heavens! if this is true the plot is a truly diabolical one!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, it is," Joe Phenix replied. "There is no mistake about the matter. The man who got up the plot is a fellow who possesses genius and skill—no common every-day rascal, and I have a suspicion that it is going to be an extremely hard matter to trap him, unless he commits some error."

"It is like a game of chess, you see," the detective explained. "The man-hunter may be the better player, but he is obliged to give odds, so to speak, on account of working in the dark, and if his adversary does not make some false moves it is not possible for him to win."

"I understand."

"It is plain to me already that I am opposed to a man this time who is a master-thief, as the Germans say."

"The scheme which he has conceived for boldness and originality surpasses anything of the kind that has come to my knowledge."

When the murder of the millionaire first startled the town and I began an investigation for the purpose of discovering who had committed the murder, I was baffled right at the beginning by the fact that I was not able to discover any motive for the murder."

"Yes, I remember that you said as much to me at the time."

"The money-king was not killed by any private enemy," the detective remarked. "He had enough foes, men who had attempted to compete with him in his gigantic stock operations and who had been ruthlessly crushed, but none of them were of the stamp who would be apt to have anything to do with a crime of this sort."

"He was not murdered by any midnight plunderers, for nothing was taken, and the manner of his taking off was so arranged that the assassin thought there was a good chance it would be believed he had taken his own life."

"Now, it goes without saying that all this trouble was not taken for nothing."

"Decidedly not."

"But the motive? There was the hitch! I puzzled my brains over the matter and was not able to solve the mystery," Joe Phenix declared.

"As far as could be seen the only people who profited by Englebert's death were his children who inherited his estate."

"Of course the supposition was monstrous that either one of the two could have had a hand in so unnatural a crime, and then again, the son and daughter had no idea that they would inherit the money, for the daughter had been often told by her father that in order to protect her from fortune-hunters she would only receive a regular income at his death, and the son believed there was a will in existence which tied up the estate as long as the law would allow; so there was no motive on their part."

"Very true, but the fact remains that the millionaire was not killed by some one for the mere pleasure of killing," the doctor remarked.

"Not being able to find any motive for the crime was what hampered me in my search for the murderer. But as you just remarked, such a crime was not committed without a good and sufficient reason, and I had faith that in time some move would be made by the assassin which would give me a clew to the motive."

"And that move has now been made!" Mairstone exclaimed.

"Yes, and now I have something tangible to work on."

"The scheme is a wonderful one, magnificently planned and boldly executed."

"The first step was to murder the millionaire; the second to make it appear that he committed suicide; that was to stop bloodhounds like myself from inquiring into the murder."

"The first succeeded, but the second did not."

"That is true, but if there had not happened to be a man like yourself right at hand who had sense enough to use his eyes, the chances are that it might have worked all right," Joe Phenix observed.

"Still the failure of that part of the plan did not give any clew to the murderer."

"Now the third step has been taken."

"Just by pure accident, six months after the death of the millionaire, a woman makes the discovery that the mysterious man whom she wedded was the great money-king, and, naturally she is anxious for her share in the estate."

"The conclusion to which you have come is a logical one. Englebert was killed so that this woman might come forward as his widow."

"Exactly! and now I reach for the man in the background! My suspicions fall upon this Englishman, the man who, by accident, made the discovery that this Englebert, who so mysteriously disappeared, the woman's husband, was the millionaire money-king."

"Yes, and although he is not apparently a very important witness for the woman, yet when the particulars are closely examined it will be seen that the Englebert who was with the woman was the millionaire."

"Oh, yes, for a jury he is the most important witness of the lot!" Joe Phenix declared. "The rest identify the man by a picture, he alone of all the witnesses is prepared to swear that he saw the millionaire with the woman."

"The others are honest—a trap was laid for them and they fell into it; they are testifying to what they believe to be the truth, and on the witness-stand such testimony is hard to shake, for it is apparent that they are telling the truth as it appears to them."

"Now we will take the testimony in detail," the detective observed. "I will not waste time upon the Englishman, for I think his story is a lie from beginning to end. He is either the master scoundrel who concocted the plot, or else a tool who is obeying the commands of the chief schemer."

"Now take the evidence of the landlady. She only saw the woman's husband a few times, never exchanged words with him but once, and as far as I can see, every time she saw the man it was after dark, in the entry, and the chances are that the passageway was dimly lighted."

"The minister and the witnesses to the marriage saw the man but once, by night, for a few minutes only, while the marriage ceremony was performed."

All the parties are Germans; the odds are a thousand to one that all of them are dull, commonplace folks, who are anything but keen observers."

Abraham Englebert was an ordinary-looking man, with nothing particularly striking about him."

"How easy it would be for a man, who was about the same size, to 'make up' with a wig and beard, so he would strongly resemble the picture of the millionaire!" Joe Phenix explained, arguing the case with that shrewdness so characteristic of him."

"Observe! the man who played the part of the millionaire need not bear such a striking resemblance to Englebert as to be able to deceive people who were acquainted with the millionaire. The task was a much easier one."

"All that was necessary was to make up near enough like Englebert so that people when shown the picture of the money king five or six months afterward, would be able to declare, 'Oh, yes, that is the man I saw!'"

"You have hit upon the truth," Dr. Mairstone declared, in a tone of conviction. "I do not think there is any doubt about it."

"Neither do I; the only trouble about the matter will be to prove that I am correct, and I am afraid that is going to be an extremely difficult job," the detective added, with a doubtful shake of the head."

"Another point about the case which has bothered me greatly, and that is the disappearance of the will which Abraham Englebert made."

"Of course, it is possible that the money-king changed his mind and destroyed the document, but I doubt it."

"It is a wild idea, I know, but the thought has come to me that the getting-up of this colossal scheme of plunder might have had something to do with the disappearance of the will—that that was one of the moves in the game, for it stands to reason that if a will was produced and no wife was mentioned in it, it would seem strange; and then too the advocates of this claim could more easily come to an arrangement with one or two heirs than with some shrewd, sharp business men intrusted with the care of an estate."

"Yes, that is certainly true."

"But to admit that that idea is possible would be to say that the murderer was an inmate of the house, or else had a tool there ready to do his bidding, or else he could not have got at the will."

"The idea does seem to be far-fetched," the doctor observed."

"Yes, I know it, but since long experience has shown me that such wild notions sometimes turn out to be true, I always take them into my calculations," Joe Phenix replied. "And I wish you to be on the lookout to see if you can discover anything suspicious about any of the inmates of the mansion."

"Oh, you can depend upon my keeping a diligent watch!" Doctor Mairstone declared."

"Now that I have explained to you the opinion I have formed regarding this matter, the next

thing to do is to see what steps will be best to take."

"I told Counselor Have to send the data regarding the witnesses to the office of Archibald, Douglass and Douglass, saying that I thought the matter had better be attended to by some legal gentleman. My idea in so acting was to give you a chance at the witnesses," the doctor explained."

"It was a wise move!" Joe Phenix declared. "I will assume a disguise and see what the parties amount to."

"When you leave here, go to the law-office and give them orders to turn the data over to a messenger whom you will send, a Mr. James Black who will give his name and ask for the letter."

"It is my idea not to allow even Archibald, Douglass and Douglass to know that I am in the game, for in all such matters as this the more secret the detective can keep his movements the better chance there is for his success."

"Of course! that goes without saying!" the doctor declared."

And then Mairstone took his departure."

He obeyed the detective's injunctions in regard to calling at the law-office, then proceeded up-town."

By three o'clock that afternoon Joe Phenix had Counselor Have's letter containing the particulars which he desired."

"Now the game begins to get interesting!" Joe Phenix cried."

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE TRAIL.

JOE PHENIX took particular pains to disguise himself before he proceeded on his quest, for it was his game to avoid exciting suspicion if he could."

The part he had resolved to play was that of a shabby-genteel lawyer, one of that large class who manage to make a living in all big cities by attending to work for large legal firms which the great lawyers do not care to bother with."

It was the same disguise which the detective had worn when he had made the acquaintance of the millionaire, and now he was using it to conceal his identity, when proceeding to discover the murderer of the money-king."

The change in his appearance, produced by the assumption of the iron-gray wig, which cut off half his forehead, was so great that it was no wonder that when he made his appearance in the office of Archibald, Douglass and Douglass, where he was well known, no one recognized him."

A better test of the completeness of his disguise could not have been devised."

After examining the memoranda penned by Counselor Have, the disguised detective determined to see the German minister in Harlem who had performed the marriage ceremony, first."

And in order to test the reverend gentleman's memory the detective went to a photographer and procured a picture of a middle-aged gentleman with a beard something similar to the one worn by the millionaire."

Joe Phenix also had a photograph of Englebert, and when the two were placed side by side it could be seen that there was little resemblance between the men who were the originals of the pictures."

The detective found the minister at home, and as he had expected he found a good-natured old gentleman, who evidently was not a man of much intelligence or education."

He was perfectly willing to tell all he knew about the marriage."

As there had been two people, the landlady and Counselor Have, to see him about the matter since he performed the ceremony, all the particulars had been freshened up in his mind."

His story was simple enough. Two strangers had come in to be married, and as they appeared to be all right he married them; it was at night; he remembered the pair perfectly; and then when the disguised detective showed him the photograph of the stranger, he had unhesitatingly declared that it was the picture of the man he had married."

The minister's wife and servant-girl, the two who had acted as witnesses, also identified the photograph."

Joe Phenix departed, feeling sure that the three would be apt to declare that the picture of almost any man with a short, dark beard was the likeness of the man who had been married."

"If they were on the witness-stand and from amidst a dozen pictures of men with beards they were asked to pick out the likeness of the man who came to be married, the odds are great that each one of the three would pick out a different photograph, and I would be willing to bet a good round sum that not one of them would select Englebert's likeness!" the detective declared."

It was a little after six o'clock when the detective got down-town, so he got his supper before proceeding to the lodging-house, which he did not reach until a little after seven."

Miss Jones came in answer to his ring, and he having explained his business she ushered him into her reception room, the back parlor."

Joe Phenix had his eyes about him and he noticed as he passed through the hall that the door of the front parlor was ajar and he immediately jumped to the conclusion that some one in the room was on the watch for the purpose of discovering who it was that had called."

When the landlady showed him into the room, he noticed that it was separated from the front parlor by sliding doors and it seemed to him that they were not closed as tightly as they might be."

"Oh!" he muttered between his teeth, "some one intends to play the spy so as to overhear what I have to say."

"All right! if they succeed in gaining any information I hope they will be able to profit by it."

Joe Phenix did not think that the landlady was a party to this proceeding, for he had already come to the conclusion that she was an honest woman."

The detective prided himself upon his knowledge of faces and it was rarely that he was obliged to admit that his judgment in such matters was not correct."

"I don't know much about these law matters," Miss Jones remarked as she brought the gentleman a chair and he complied with her invitation to be seated."

"I never was in a court-room in my life," she added. "And suppose that if I have to go that I shall feel like a fish out of water."

"My dear madam, I do not think there is much likelihood of this case ever getting into a court-room," the disguised detective remarked in the smooth, oily tone which, when he wore a disguise, like the one in which he was attired, he assumed in order to hide his own deep, sonorous tones."

"I judge from the little knowledge I have of the matter that it will be settled quietly without coming to trial. It is one of those delicate family matters which should never be allowed to become public."

This was for the benefit of the listener, whom the disguised detective felt sure had his eye to the crack between the sliding doors."

"And you think Mrs. Englebert will get her money all right without any trouble?" the landlady asked with that charming innocence so characteristic of the female mind."

"Well, I should not be surprised, but of course, it would not do for me to pass an opinion until I examine into the merits of the case," the gentleman replied, assuming the non-committal air common to the majority of legal gentlemen."

"But I will say, that, from what I have already learned of the affair, it seems to me that Mrs. Englebert has a strong case."

"Oh, there isn't any doubt about it!" Miss Jones declared in her honest, outspoken way."

"I come in place of Archibald, Douglass and Douglass, the legal firm which has charge of all of Mr. Maurice Englebert's business, but as a matter or this kind is entirely out of their line, they put the matter into my hands."

"Yes, I see, and I do hope you will be satisfied that everything is all right, so that Mrs. Englebert will be able to get her money, for the Lord knows she needs it badly enough!" the landlady declared."

"She has been with me now for a number of months and I must say a nicer little woman I never had in the house."

"You will excuse me if I have to question you pretty sharply about this matter?" the supposed lawyer remarked in his blandest tones. "I have to get at all the facts, you know, so as to be able to make a complete report."

"Oh, bless you! I don't mind!" the landlady exclaimed. "I am going to tell the truth about the affair, and nothing but the truth, either, so it doesn't matter how many questions you ask."

"Yes, I see."

And then the disguised detective began his examination."

The landlady's story was soon told and then the detective tried the picture test on her."

As he had expected she had never seen the gentleman but when he passed in the entry, after dark, and on the night when he had committed his wife to her care."

But the landlady took care to explain that the entry was plenty light enough for her to see what he looked like, and when she was asked if he resembled the picture which the detective produced she answered that he did."

Like the Harlem people she was easily deceived in regard to this photograph business."

"Your story certainly goes far to prove that this lady is really the widow of the dead millionaire!"

"And she will come in for a good deal of money, I suppose," Miss Jones asked with natural curiosity."

"Oh, yes, two or three millions of dollars!"

The landlady threw up her hands in amazement."

"How much?" she exclaimed."

"Two or three millions, I said."

"You don't mean it?"

"Oh, yes, I do!"

"Well, I never!" Miss Jones exclaimed, her breath fairly taken away by this unexpected intelligence."

"Oh, yes, there isn't any mistake about the matter," the supposed lawyer asserted.

"I declare! I never expected to hear anything of that kind!"

"Mr. Englebert was a very wealthy man, one of the richest men in the country, and if this lady succeeds in proving that she is his widow—and she will owe a deal of thanks to you if she does—there is no doubt that she will get three millions of dollars, perhaps four or five.

"That is a point that I cannot speak positively upon, for I am not well posted in regard to the exact value of the estate, but there is no doubt that if this lady establishes her claim she will be one of the wealthiest women in the country.

"Well, I must say that I am surprised!" Miss Jones declared, unable to get over her amazement.

"So if she has agreed to give you anything in consideration of your testifying in her behalf it ought to be a handsome sum, for she can well afford to part with the money if she succeeds in winning."

Miss Jones was not sharp enough to see the trap, but her honesty enabled her to keep out of it.

"Sakes alive!" she cried, "she never said that she would give me anything! I never thought of such a thing! I guess I ain't one of them kind of creatures that has to be paid for telling the truth.

"She is welcome to my story if it will do her any good, and I should not dream of charging her a cent for it, either!

"I can make a living without sponging on other people!"

"Ah, yes, I see, but she ought to make you a handsome present if she wins."

"I don't care for it, but I suppose you would like to see her, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I certainly would."

"I will call her," and the landlady hurried away.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WOMAN SPEAKS.

IN ten minutes Miss Jones returned, accompanied by the mild, blue-eyed, blonde English girl to whom the reader has already been introduced.

"This is Mrs. Englebert," said the landlady as she presented her companion to the disguised detective.

Joe Phenix rose, bowed as politely as though she had been the first lady in the land, and in a few well-chosen words expressed the pleasure he felt at meeting the lady.

Then the landlady said she hoped that the others would excuse her as she had some work to which attention must be given and then departed.

The gentleman hastened to bring a chair for the lady.

"Did the landlady explain to you the nature of my errand?" he asked after they had seated themselves.

"Oh, yes, and she said that you were not at all the kind of person that she expected to see," the lady remarked in a simple, childish way which would be apt to give the impression that she was not in the habit of weighing her words before she spoke.

"Is that possible?" the disguised detective remarked in that smooth, bland manner which had so favorably impressed Miss Jones.

"Well, her idea of lawyers was that they were a cross, disagreeable set of men, but she declares that you were as pleasant as could be, and she did not mind being questioned by such a gentleman as yourself."

"I assure you I am really delighted that I was lucky enough to make a favorable impression upon the lady, and I trust I shall be equally fortunate with yourself, Mrs. Englebert," and he made a gallant bow.

"Oh, yes! there is no doubt about that!" the lady exclaimed, her mild, blue eyes beaming kindly upon the gentleman. "Miss Jones's description prepared me, and the moment I saw you I felt certain that we would get on well together!"

"Really—upon my word, I feel excessively flattered!" the gentleman declared with another bow.

"You don't mind my plain speaking, I hope?" she said, abruptly, with a little touch of shyness, as though the thought had come to her that it might not be agreeable.

"My dear Mrs. Englebert, if there is anything I admire in this world it is candor!"

"Oh I am so glad of that!" the lady declared.

"I know that I have an awkward fashion of saying just what I think, without stopping to consider whether I ought to speak or not. I am aware that it is not the proper thing to do, still I cannot help it: it is my nature, and I suppose I shall never learn to be reserved."

"Ah, my dear madam, if you have no worse fault than that you may consider yourself to be extremely lucky."

"Oh, as far as that goes, I don't doubt that I am a whole bundle of faults as you will probably discover when you have known me long enough to find just what kind of a woman I am!" Mrs.

Englebert declared with an expressive shrug of her shoulders.

"But there, I am chatting away just like a foolish school-girl, taking up your valuable time, which is extremely stupid in me, of course."

"Oh, there is no haste, I assure you."

"Ah, you are merely saying that to please me I am sure!" the lady declared in her placid good-natured way. "But I am all ready for my examination, and you can begin as soon as you please."

"This is rather a disagreeable task," the supposed lawyer began, striving his best to appear kind and courteous.

He had got the idea that the woman was a most excellent actress. He believed that all her simplicity was assumed, and that the round babyish face with the mild blue eyes was no index to the heart she carried within her bosom.

So, acting on this notion, he was doing his best to play his part to perfection.

He felt that he was in the presence of so able an actress that any short-comings of his own in that line would surely not escape her notice.

"Well, I do not know, of course," she remarked, slowly and in a doubtful way.

"I don't really see why it ought to be," she added. "You have come here to find out all about me, and as I am prepared to answer all your questions we ought to get on splendidly together."

"Yes, that is the truth, but you do not seem to understand I shall have to question you just as if I suspected that there was something wrong about your story."

The lady appeared to reflect over the matter for a moment, and then she said:

"Yes—I suppose you will have to do that, but if you do not question me you will not find out what you want to know; that is, unless I tell my story myself, and I should think that it would be much better for you to question me."

"You need not be afraid to speak freely, for I will not take offense, no matter how inquisitive you are," she hastened to say.

"I am not going to tell you anything but the truth, and there isn't anything that I am anxious to conceal."

"Well, well, I do not see why we should not get on nicely together!" and the supposed lawyer rubbed his hands together in a manner indicative of great satisfaction.

"You know, all this strange affair seems like a dream to me," the lady declared, shaking her head in a doubtful way. "And I do not believe I will be sure that it is the truth until I am placed in possession of the money."

"Have you any objection to give me a slight sketch of your life?" the gentleman asked. "I judge that you are not a native of this country."

There was a trap in this pleasantly made request.

If the woman was an adventuress—one who was playing a part for the sake of clutching a rich prize, she would know well enough that her past life had nothing whatever to do with her claim to be the widow of Abraham Englebert.

No one had a right to know anything about her previous to the first meeting with the great money-king.

If she was an experienced adventuress she would be apt to suggest to him that he had made a mistake in asking such a question.

But the acute Joe Phenix was doomed to be disappointed, for the placid expression upon the lady's face did not change in the least as she answered.

"Certainly, of course, but I have not much to tell!"

Did this reply proceed from simple innocence or was she so deep—so versed in trickery, as to be able to detect that a trap had been laid to catch her?

With all the detective's experience he was not able to decide which was the correct one of these two assumptions.

"I shall listen with a great deal of pleasure, I assure you!" he declared.

"I am English by birth, a Londoner, and have lived in London about all my life," she began.

"My father's name was John Green, my mother's Martha, the same as my own."

"Both my parents followed the stage for a living, and when I became old enough I, too, became a professional—I was an only child by the way."

"By their art of acting my parents managed to make a living, not a very good one, it must be confessed, for neither one of them held a prominent position; both played small parts, and received small salaries."

"As a child, when I began to act, I was thought to be very smart, and got quite a good salary, but when I grew older the conviction gradually forced itself upon me that I would never be able to make anything on the stage, and so I made up my mind to leave the profession as soon as I could."

"I had received a good education, for my mother taught me herself. She was a gentleman's daughter who had run away and married the young actor when she wasn't anything more than a school-girl, and the result was that her

father promptly disinherited her and none of her family ever had anything to do with her after her unfortunate marriage.

"I told my mother that I wanted to stop acting, and so she prepared me for a governess, but after I was ready to start in my new career I found that I would have a great deal of difficulty in getting a place, for I had no recommendations, and the fact that I had been on the stage operated against me."

"Yes, I should imagine that it would be so, for there is a prejudice against stage people," the gentleman remarked.

"Finally I got a position in a gentleman's family, in the North of England. The pay was very poor and the work very hard, but I endured it for the sake of getting a start, thinking that it would lead to something better."

"Then there came a sudden calamity in my life; both of my parents died, being carried away by a malignant fever, and I was left all alone in the world, and as misfortunes never come singly, right after this sad event I lost the place, my employer's fortune being swept away by some unlucky speculations."

"I had no ties to bind me to England, and as I had heard that in this country almost everybody did well, I crossed the ocean, but after arriving here I found that it was just about as difficult for a young and friendless girl to get on here as at home."

"Then I made Mr. Englebert's acquaintance; he fell in love with me, and was anxious to make me his wife."

"Of course he was old enough to be my father, and at first I hesitated; but then he was so good, so kind to me, so different from anybody that I had ever met, that in a very few days I forgot the difference in our ages, and when one night we were out for a little excursion, he abruptly said that he did not see any reason why we could not go and get married right away, the novelty of the idea so bewildered me that, almost before I had any idea of what I was doing, I had consented, and we were in the presence of the minister."

"That was rather quick work!"

"Yes, but I have never regretted it, although we only spent a few happy days together," and tears came in the eyes of the woman as she spoke.

They were genuine tears, for the disguised detective could detect the drops on the heavy golden-hued eyelashes.

"He went away and never came back," the woman continued, her voice full of pathos.

"Now they tell me that he is dead—that he was a very rich man, and there is a deal of money coming to me; but, oh, sir, I would much rather have my dear husband than all the money in the world!"

"Yes, yes, I can understand that," the gentleman remarked in a voice full of sympathy. "Quite natural, of course, under the circumstances."

"The revelation was an amazing one to me for I had no suspicion that my husband was wealthy—that is, I mean, very wealthy."

"He was not a man who said much about himself, and I am not one of the kind who delight in finding out everything they can."

"I am not very curious, even though I am a woman," she added with a smile.

"I can see that you are of a placid nature, and one who would not be apt to pester anybody with questions."

"Of course, I understood that my husband was a business man, and his time was pretty well occupied, but from what little he said I got the impression that he was not in business for himself, but acting for other people; a sort of agent."

"Ah, yes."

"He seemed to have plenty of money, and when I remonstrated with him for buying me such expensive jewelry he only laughed, and said that if I was wise I would take all I could get while he was in the humor for giving, and as to the expense I need not trouble myself about that for he was amply able to afford the outlay."

"Naturally, I was deeply touched by his generosity, and did all in my power to make him happy," and again the tears stood in the woman's eyes.

"Aha! my lady," the veteran detective thought. "If you are playing a part—and it is my suspicion that you are—you are certainly the finest actress that I have ever seen, and if you did not make a success upon the stage it was because your art was too delicate and refined to be appreciated by the great rabble who compose the majority of theater-goers."

This is what Joe Phenix said to himself but to the lady he remarked:

"I do not wonder that you soon learned to love the man who treated you so well. I suppose you were astonished when he took you into the jewelry store and told you to select your trinkets?" and the disguised detective beamed in the most friendly manner upon the woman as he put the question.

This was another trap.

The man-hunter wished to learn if the husband took the wife to the store when he bought the articles.

If he did, then the next point was to ascertain

the particular shop to which they went, and then there would be another witness, or two, in regard to the identity of the man.

But this second attempt to trap the woman was destined to be as unsuccessful as the first, but whether through accident or design was more than the detective could tell.

"Oh, I did not go with him," the lady replied in her placid way. "I had no idea that he intended to present me with any jewelry until he brought the things in one night, tossed the package into my lap saying, 'There, my dear, is a little surprise for you!'"

"Ah, yes, and you were astonished of course?"

"Very much, indeed! And now that he is gone the remembrance of his goodness helps to make the affliction less terrible."

And then the lady, apparently overcome by her emotions, took out her handkerchief and pressed it to her eyes for a few moments.

There was no mistake in regard to her weeping, for the argus-eyed detective could plainly see the tears.

But he did not consider this any proof that the woman was not playing a part.

He had met women before during his career as a detective who could bring tears to their eyes whenever they wished.

All the great actresses in this world are not on the public stage.

There are plenty of women in private life who can act equally as well as any tragic queen who ever won fame and fortune behind the footlights.

"You must steel yourself to bear the loss," the gentleman remarked in a soothing way. "It is the curse of nature, you know. We love and we lose! It is our fate."

"Oh, yes, I know I am weak and foolish to give way to my grief but I cannot help it sometimes," she remarked, removing the handkerchief from her eyes, and evidently making an effort to appear calm. "But you see, sir, I have had a hard time of it all through my life," she explained. "I have indeed been 'fortune's fool' and when I succeeded in winning the love of this good man—really, it came to me unsought, and I suppose I do not speak correctly when I say that I won his love—but when it came to me I thought that at last fate was tired of persecuting me and I was about to enjoy a long period of happiness, but you know the old saying, 'Man proposes and fate disposes!'"

"Yes, yes, and how very true it is too!"

"It certainly was true in my case—much to my sorrow!" the lady declared with a doleful shake of the head.

"I thought I had secured a safe anchorage in the haven of happiness after a long and tempestuous voyage, but it was only a vain imagining; soon the storm came and again I found myself tossing upon the stormy waves of misfortune."

"The darkest hour is always before the dawn, you know, and if you succeed in proving that you are the widow of Abraham Englebert, the money-king, you will have wealth enough to keep you like a queen for the rest of your life!" the detective declared.

"Yes, I suppose so from what I have been told," the lady replied in her peculiar dead and alive way, "but, I assure you, sir, that I have not allowed myself to become excited over the matter, for it is as I have told you; my life has been so full of disappointments that I am doubtful whether it can be possible I am going to be blessed by any such piece of good luck as this will be."

"You know I have become a regular skeptic and until it is settled beyond the shadow of a doubt that the money is coming to me I shall not allow myself to believe that I am going to be so fortunate."

"Quite proper, of course!" the disguised detective remarked with an approving nod. "If you do not permit yourself to give way to anticipations it will not be possible for you to be disappointed."

"Yes, that is exactly what I thought," the lady replied.

"You see, my pathway in life has been so full of ups and downs that I have become quite a philosopher, and I try to bear myself so that either good or evil fortune will not have much effect upon me."

"Well, if one is so constituted as to be able to take the decrees of fate in that way it is certainly far better than otherwise."

"But in regard to this affair, I must say that you certainly appear to have a strong case," the gentleman remarked in a judicial way.

"Of course, I am not able to judge in regard to that," Mrs. Englebert replied in a sort of helpless way.

"All I know about the matter is that I married a gentleman who said his name was Abraham Englebert, and from the way he spoke I got the impression that he was well-to-do, but more than that I know not, and I can assure you, sir, that it was a great surprise to me when I was told that my husband was one of the great money-kings of the city."

"Undoubtedly! very natural under the circumstances. It was just through accident, I understand, that the discovery was made."

"Yes, sir. When time passed on and my

husband did not return as he had said he would, I immediately came to the conclusion that some accident had befallen him."

"The landlady here, Miss Jones—who has not a very good opinion of men—that is, I suppose, because in keeping a lodging-house like this she has encountered so many who were not nice—was inclined to believe that my husband had deserted me, but I did not entertain the thought for a moment, for I knew that he was not that kind of a man."

"Then a gentleman, a Mr. Rochester, came here to get a room; he happened to see me, and by one of those strange chances which sometimes happen, he had seen me out walking with my husband, and as he knew Mr. Englebert by sight, when he heard my story he was able to explain why it was that my husband did not return to me."

"Ah, yes, yes! What a fortunate circumstance, to be sure!" the disguised detective declared. "If it had not been for this lucky accident you would not have known that you were the widow of a man who had been one of the great money-kings of America."

"No, sir, it is hardly probable that I should have made the discovery for the idea never entered my head that my husband was a very wealthy man," the lady replied in her simple way. "I imagined that he was a traveling man who made a good salary, that was all."

"So really if you came in for this money you may thank this Mr. Rochester for it."

"Oh, yes, I am aware of that, and I feel very grateful to him for his kindness in interesting himself about the matter too. I told him that if I got the money that I thought I ought to give him a good share of it, for if it had not been for his interesting himself about the matter I would not have got any of it."

"That is certainly the truth and it is quite considerate on your part to make such an offer," the gentleman observed, assuming to be much interested, and in truth he *was* interested, for as a professional man-hunter he was amazed at the affair developed to see how cunningly the scheme had been planned—how carefully the plotters had been to cover every point.

"I made the offer in my stupid blunt way, and Mr. Rochester was seriously offended, and really I would not have said or done anything to offend him for the world," the lady remarked.

"But, you see, I am one of those foolish creatures who are always making mistakes. It is the old jest, you know, I never open my mouth but what I put my foot in it." And she smiled with a deprecating way as she spoke.

"Well, as to that, my dear Mrs. Englebert, I do not believe that anybody loses anything in the long run by being frank and honest!" the other declared.

"No, I suppose not," Mrs. Englebert replied in a thoughtful way. "Still, I think that if I had more tact and was not quite so blunt in speaking that I would get on better."

"The gentleman, I presume, laughed at the idea of taking anything on account of the interest he had displayed in the matter?"

"Oh, yes, he said that he would scorn the idea of being paid for any such slight service."

"Quite generous of the gentleman, I am sure," the supposed lawyer remarked with an approving nod. "If he had been inclined to play a sharp game he could have turned this affair to his own profit, for as he is one of the most important witnesses—the man whose testimony is extremely valuable to you—if he had chosen to refuse to testify unless he was well paid for so doing you would have been obliged to comply."

"Yes, I suppose I would," the lady remarked in a helpless sort of way. "But, really, you know, I am so ignorant of business, because I never had a head for anything of the kind, that I never thought of what he might be able to do, but now that you speak of it, I can see he has acted quite nobly."

"It is really unfortunate that I have such a poor head for business," she continued. "And I suppose that it is because I am so deficient in that way that I have had such a hard time to get along."

"Well, if you succeed in establishing your claim to the Englebert estate you will be placed far beyond the reach of misfortune."

"Yes, I am aware of that, but do you know, sir, I hardly dare to allow myself to contemplate such good fortune, for it does not seem possible that I will ever be so favorably situated. It seems too good to be true," and the lady heaved a deep sigh as she spoke.

"Oh, I think you can confidently look forward, for so far, your case seems to be an excellent one," the disguised detective asserted in his bland way, so calculated to deceive.

Then he drew a photograph from his pocket and handed it to the lady.

It was the same picture which the minister and the members of his household had so confidently pronounced to be the likeness of the Abraham Englebert whose marriage to the lady had taken place in the Germa's house.

But the blue eyes of Mrs. Englebert were evidently keen ones, despite their sleepy look, for after making an inspection of the photograph she shook her head.

"This picture looks a little like my husband,"

she said. "But I do not think it is his. If it is it is not a good likeness, and most certainly does not do him justice."

The disguised detective produced a dozen of photographs; all of them were likenesses of men with beards, and looked considerably alike.

"See if you can pick out your husband's picture," he said.

The lady occupied some five minutes in examining the photographs, and then she held up one of the cards.

"This is the only one which, to my thinking, looks like him," she said.

She had succeeded in selecting the right one.

"That is correct!" the gentleman assented. "You are going to make out a strong case, I can see that."

"Well, I hope so, for it will be very nice to have plenty of money."

"Now, I would like to see Mr. Rochester if I can."

"I will call Miss Jones!" the lady replied, and immediately summoned the landlady.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PLAIN WORDS.

WHEN Miss Jones came she said she believed that the gentleman was in his room, and proceeded to ascertain.

This was the fact, and the disguised detective was immediately introduced.

Mr. Rochester received the visitor with the ease characteristic of a well-bred gentleman, invited him to be seated, and listened with courteous attention while the supposed lawyer unfolded his business.

"Ah, yes, I see," he said, when the recital was ended. "A very good idea, indeed, I must say! I am not a lawyer, you know, but it seems to me that all cases of this kind are much better settled outside of a court, and so I think the Englebert family are wise to go to work in this manner."

"You understand, I hope, that I have no interest in this affair, at all, beyond the satisfaction which comes from helping a deserving fellow-creature," the Englishman hastened to add.

"Yes, the lady explained, to me that she was anxious to pay for your kindness, but you declined to be rewarded."

"By Jove! I should think myself to be a miserable beggar, you know, if I took any money for doing anything of the kind!" the gentleman declared.

"I suppose you are acquainted with the fact that it was by the merest accident that I happened to discover that this Mrs. Englebert here was the widow of the great millionaire?"

"Yes, I think I am now in possession of about all the facts in the premises," the disguised detective replied.

"There are only a few more points which I desire to cover," he continued. "And I will be much obliged if you can post me in regard to them."

"Certainly, of course, I shall be delighted."

"You were acquainted with Mr. Abraham Englebert?"

"By sight only, you know, not personally," the other replied. "When I came to this country, about seven months ago, I made a point of seeing all that was to be seen, and 'took in' the bulls and bears of Wall street, as you Americans say. Of course, all the notables of the great money market were pointed out to me, and that is how I came to know Englebert; the man's appearance was so different from what I expected to see that I took particular notice of him."

"My idea was that I should see a big man, with an imposing presence, and I was surprised to find that the mighty money-king was an unassuming person whom no stranger would be apt to pick out in a crowd as being a power in the land."

"Yes, that is true. Mr. Englebert did not present an imposing presence."

"As I surveyed the man with a deal of curiosity it was an easy matter for me to recognize him when I met the gentleman on the Bowery with a lady on his arm, particularly as I was surprised to see a man like Englebert in such a neighborhood."

"You are sure that you have not made any mistake about the matter—that you were not deceived by an accidental resemblance?" the disguised detective questioned.

"Well, of course there is a possibility that I have made a mistake," the Englishman admitted.

"Still I don't believe that I have, and I feel so positive about the matter that I am prepared to go on the witness-stand and swear that the man I saw, arm in arm with this Mrs. Englebert on the Bowery, was the identical individual who was pointed out to me in Wall street as being Abraham Englebert, the great money-king."

"There is a chance, you know, that the person who pointed the millionaire out to you may have made a mistake," the disguised detective urged.

"Oh, yes, I am aware of that fact—that is, under ordinary circumstances such a mistake might have been possible, but in this case it was not, for the gentleman who acted as my guide was a detective who knew all the prominent

men, and then just after the money-king was pointed out to me by the detective—he was standing on the steps of the building wherein he had his office—a gentleman came up and addressed him by name—I was so near that I distinctly overheard the salutations—then the two went into the office together.”

“It really seems conclusive that there could not be any mistake about the matter,” the supposed lawyer remarked. “And the detective’s evidence in regard to this point will be valuable too. Can you recall his name?”

“Yes, I can, for I have an excellent memory for names and faces,” the Englishman replied, immediately. “His name was Barry—Detective Barry.”

“I think I have heard of the gentleman,” the supposed lawyer remarked, in his mild way. “And as I said a moment ago, his testimony will be valuable.”

“I should imagine so, although I have very little knowledge in regard to such matters,” Mr. Rochester remarked, evidently very well satisfied with the way matters were going.

The disguised detective did not think it was necessary at this stage of the game to tell the Englishman that he knew that Detective Barry had been dead and buried for over four months, so it would not be possible to produce him as a witness.

“A sharp trick,” thought the acute man-hunter, “to give the name of the man who would not be able to deny that he had acted as the guide to this stranger in his Wall street trip.”

And this fact made the bloodhound more certain than he had been before that he was on the track of a gigantic conspiracy.

But no one would ever have been able to guess from the expression on his face that he was not satisfied with the Englishman’s statement.

Then the disguised detective produced the photographs.

“Will you kindly tell me if you recognize the face of Mr. Englebert in any of these portraits?” he asked.

“Certainly!”

And it hardly took Mr. Rochester a second to pick out the right card.

“This is his likeness!” he declared, as he held up the photograph.

“That is correct! It is evident that you know the right man.”

“Oh, it is as I told you,” the Englishman remarked. “I felt satisfied from the beginning that there could not be any mistake about the matter, and that is why I interested myself on behalf of this poor woman!”

“It seemed to me that it was a great shame for her to suffer—to be put to her trumps, you know, to get bread to put into her mouth while she really was entitled to a deal of money.”

“Well, sir, if she succeeds in establishing her claim she may thank you for it!” the supposed lawyer declared.

“That is all right!” Mr. Rochester replied, in an off-hand way. “I do not pretend to be any better than I ought to be, but in a case of this kind I should not consider a fellow to be much of a man if he was not willing to do what he could to help a poor creature along, situated as this lady is. It is really no trouble, you know; that is, not any to speak of, and virtue is its own reward, as I used to write in my copy-book when I went to school.”

“Very true—very true, indeed!” and the disguised detective rubbed his hands together and beamed on the Englishman in the most friendly way. “I am really glad that this case is coming on so well,” he continued. “It is so much more pleasant to be able to make a favorable report than one to the contrary.”

“Have you found everything satisfactory so far?” the Englishman inquired.

“Oh, yes, there does not seem to be any gap in the chain of evidence.”

“That is the way it looked to me when I made an examination. After I heard the lady’s story, you know, I became interested, but before I advised her to make a move I took pains to see what evidence could be procured to show that she was the wife of the millionaire, and I will say to you frankly that the more I examined into the matter the firmer became my belief that she had the strongest kind of a case. Of course, as I said before, I am not a lawyer, and so am only judging the matter from a layman’s stand-point, yet, still it seems to me that the case is so clear that she will not have any difficulty in proving that she was the wife of millionaire Abraham Englebert.”

“The evidence is strong: no doubt of it!” the disguised detective remarked with a knowing shake of the head.

“That is the opinion of Counselor Have and he is a man not likely to make a mistake in a matter of this kind.”

“True—very true.”

“He examined into the merits of the case thoroughly before he would consent to take charge of it,” the Englishman explained. “You see his first impression was that it would turn out to be a kind of a blackmailing scheme, and he was reluctant to have anything to do with it.”

“Yes, I am aware that the counselor is a cool and cautious man; one of the kind who likes to

be sure of his ground before he makes an advance.”

“Well, from what little I know of him I should judge that he was a man of that kind.”

“He is an extremely able lawyer—none better in his line in the city, and as he has taken the case it is evident that he has faith in it.”

“Oh, yes, he has! After making a careful examination he told me he calculated that Mrs. Englebert’s chances of winning were fully one hundred to one.”

“His judgment is good and therefore his opinion valuable,” the supposed lawyer remarked with a very wise look.

“It is one of those cases though where old and experienced men are apt to jump to the conclusion that there is something wrong about the matter,” he continued.

The Englishman elevated his eyebrows in surprise.

“Do you think so?” he asked.

“Oh, yes, and I will give you an illustration. Mr. Maurice Englebert consulted a detective in regard to this matter before he put the affair into the hands of Archibald, Douglass and Douglass.”

“It seems to me that that was rather strange on his part,” the Englishman remarked, evidently a little disturbed by the intelligence.

“Well, I suppose some friend of his advised him to take the step.”

“Yes, but it seems to me that this is a case for lawyers, not for detectives.”

“He was acting on the idea that the claim was a fraudulent one.”

“Ah, yes, I see; but don’t you think he was rather quick in coming to that conclusion?” Mr. Rochester asked. “Would it not have been wiser to have examined into the matter a little before forming an opinion?”

“I am not sure that I have all the facts in the case correctly, but I believe the detective was not consulted until after the party whom Mr. Englebert deputed to see Lawyer Have made his report.”

“Then, of course, he did know something about the case.”

“Yes, and when the matter was laid before the detective he immediately declared it was his opinion that there wasn’t any merit in the claim.”

“Quite a bold declaration!” the Englishman remarked with a sneer.

“I do not know much about detectives,” he added. “But from what little I have seen of the fraternity I am satisfied that the great majority of them are regular humbugs.”

“No doubt that there are a large number of them who do not amount to anything,” the other assented.

“In this case I have no means of knowing the character of the man whom Mr. Englebert consulted,” the disguised detective continued. “But whether he is a first-class man, or otherwise, he certainly did not hesitate to speak in the freest manner.”

“To my mind that fact would indicate that he did not amount to much,” Mr. Rochester declared. “A good man—one who thoroughly understood his business—would not be apt to speak hastily. It is only the charlatan—the man whose knowledge is limited—that attempts to decide weighty matters in an off-hand way. The man of experience hesitates to speak until after he has thoroughly examined the subject upon which his advice is desired.”

“Well, I suppose that this party thought he thoroughly understood the matter, for after hearing Mr. Englebert describe the case, he at once declared that it was a carefully plotted conspiracy, and the woman was no more the widow of Abraham Englebert than he was!”

“That was a bold assertion, truly.”

“Yes, the man spoke in the frankest manner, and his theory was a strange one.”

“Are you aware that there is a mystery in regard to the death of Mr. Abraham Englebert?”

“Yes, I read all about it in the newspapers.”

“Well, this detective asserts that it is his opinion the millionaire was murdered so this scheme to plunder his estate might be worked.”

An expression indicative of vast astonishment appeared on the face of the Englishman, and it was evident, too, that he was seriously disturbed by the statement.

“Upon my word! I must say that this is a most remarkable announcement,” he declared.

“The man was fully in earnest, and believed he had hit upon the truth,” the supposed lawyer explained.

“He pronounced the affair to be one of the most elaborate and gigantic conspiracies that he had ever heard of.”

“Yes, I should say so!”

“The first move was to get a man who resembled the millionaire to play the part of his double and be married to the woman. That would not be a difficult feat to accomplish, for Englebert was an ordinary-looking man, and as the detective bade young Englebert take notice, all the witnesses to his identity only saw him by night, so that any man about the size of the millionaire, by assuming a wig and beard similar to his hair and beard, would be able to pass for the money-king.”

“Ah, yes, a very fine and ingenious theory!” the Englishman exclaimed, in a tone full of sarcasm. “But I am sure I could not be deceived even by such a cunning trick.”

“Then in regard to the lady, this detective said she would turn out to be some adventuress, a woman whose past career it would be difficult to trace, and about whom but little information could be gained. And he made the same statement in regard to yourself, for he had the opinion that you were the principal conspirator.”

The Englishman burst out in a loud laugh, yet there was not much merriment in his tones.

“By Jove! this fellow is putting it on extremely thick, you know!” he exclaimed. “And I suppose that all of us who are concerned in this affair ought to be very much obliged that we are not promptly clapped in jail, since he is so well-satisfied that we are a band of miserable conspirators!”

“Ah, my dear sir, but all this is only theory, he lacks proof!” the other replied.

“Yes, I should say he did, and I fancy he will not be able to prove that what he says is the truth if he lives to be a hundred years old!” the Englishman asserted.

“He was confident, of course, that his theory was correct.”

“All such men always are!” Mr. Rochester declared with a sneer.

“When the matter was submitted to me for an opinion, I, naturally, was astounded by the bold statement; it seemed incredible!”

“Yes, I should say so!” the Englishman exclaimed with another sneer. “But if this detective is so sure that he is right why did he not take the case—why were you employed?”

“I presume that Mr. Englebert was counseled by Archibald, Douglass and Douglass, that the theory was too far-fetched to be taken into consideration.”

“The detective who got the thing up has evidently mistaken his vocation. He ought to turn his attention to writing romances. With such a fertile imagination he ought to make a first-class author!” the Englishman declared, in a tone full of contempt.

“I presume he is working on this theory now, and I, as one of the principal conspirators, am duly shadowed—that is the correct word, I believe? whenever I walk the streets!”

The supposed lawyer laughed as though he considered that this was a good joke.

“Oh, I do not think that anything of that kind will be attempted, unless the detective goes into the business on his own account,” he replied.

“One thing you may be sure of, and that is, the firm of Archibald, Douglass and Douglass will not have anything to do with the matter.”

“In fact, you can judge how little reliance we place upon the story by my being willing to tell you all about it.”

“Yes, of course, I understand. If you believed there was any truth in the theory you would not be apt to allow me to know anything of the matter.”

“Certainly not! That would be the height of folly!” the other declared. “It would be like a gamester showing his hand to his opponent.”

“Most undoubtedly!”

“Then, as I said before, the firm I represent would not have anything to do with such an affair. They do not touch criminal cases.”

“Well, I believe I have learned all that is possible for me to know about the case,” the disguised detective continued, rising. “And so will take my departure. Much obliged for your kindness, sir!”

“Not at all!” the Englishman responded, and then he saw the other to the street.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ENGLISHMAN’S IDEA.

WHEN the Englishman returned to his apartment he found Mrs. Englebert there.

She was standing by the window, hiding behind one of the heavy curtains, which were draped by the sides of the window in the old style.

It was evident she was watching the departure of the supposed lawyer.

She had come into the room through the sliding doors, for one of them was half open.

Her face was pale and there was an anxious expression in her eyes.

The man closed the door carefully behind him.

He too appeared troubled.

“Where is Miss Jones?” he asked.

“She has gone out and will not be back for a couple of hours.”

“You are sure about that?”

“Yes, for she asked me to answer the bell if any one rung.”

The man sunk into a chair and rested his head on his hand, evidently perplexed.

The woman also seated herself and gazed upon the Englishman with an anxious face.

“Did you hear the conversation between this party and myself?” he asked after a long pause.

“Yes, not a word escaped me!”

“Well, what do you think of it?”

“I don’t know,” and the woman shook her head in a bewildered way.

“Never in all my life was I more astonished!” the Englishman declared.

"Yes, it really seems to be almost beyond belief!" the woman exclaimed. "How can it be possible that any one could come to such a conclusion? There is not the least bit of proof to go upon."

"Oh, no, it is all pure conjecture, and it goes to show that the detective, whoever he is, must be a most remarkable man."

"Have you any idea as to who it is?"

"Yes, I think I have. I do not believe that there is but one man in the country who could form such a theory upon such unsubstantial grounds and that is the bloodhound who is called Joe Phenix."

"Of course, being a stranger here, and not knowing one detective from another, it is not possible for me to form any opinion about the matter."

"I have heard this detective spoken of as being a regular demon on the scent by men who have been hunted down by him," the Englishman observed, in a gloomy way.

"Judging by this disclosure he is indeed a man to be feared!" the woman remarked.

"The revelation took me so completely by surprise that for a moment I did not know what to say, and yet I am a man who has always prided himself upon his self-possession."

"I do not wonder at it, for I was so astounded that if I had been face-to-face with the man I surely could not have helped showing my confusion."

"It was so entirely unexpected!" the Englishman declared. "Everything was going on so nicely, and I fancied from the way the man conversed with you he was satisfied that everything was all right, and I was congratulating myself upon the fact that the way was clear for us to seize the prize when this disclosure was made."

"Yes, but he certainly did not seem to place any credence in the theory," Mrs. Englebert observed, thoughtfully. "And how strange it seems, too, when you come to think about it, that he should have made the disclosure!"

"Ah, the fellow is a deep rogue!" the other declared, with a heavy frown. "At first I was deceived into the belief that he was a mild-mannered old fellow, who might be shrewd enough when it came to dry law matters, but was sadly out of place when set to examine into the merits of such a case as this one."

"That is exactly the opinion that I formed!" the woman declared.

"But I have changed my mind, though!" the Englishman exclaimed.

"The man is no pottering old fossil of a lawyer, but a shrewd, sharp man of the world, and he made the disclosure in order to let us see that he was up to our game."

"Yes, but was not that a mistake?" the woman asked, thoughtfully. "It seems to me that it would have been the better policy for him to have kept the knowledge to himself."

"Well, I don't know; it is hard to decide a point like that," the other replied with a doubtful shake of the head.

"It may be that it was his idea that if he warned us that our game was suspected we would become alarmed and afraid to keep on."

"But it is not possible for him to prove that there is any truth in this theory. His statement must be backed by evidence! It is one thing to make an assertion, but quite another to prove that the assertion is the truth!" Mrs. Englebert declared. "And now that we are on our guard, it seems to me that it will be ever so much more difficult for him to procure proof that there is a conspiracy."

"It would seem so, but I am satisfied that this fellow is playing a deep game, and there is no telling what scheme he may have on foot," Mr. Rochester observed, thoughtfully.

"It is my idea, you know, that this man was no lawyer but a detective in disguise."

"Do you think so?" Mrs. Englebert inquired, evidently astonished by the supposition.

"I know that the idea is an odd one but I believe that it is correct, all the same!" the Englishman declared.

"The fellow plays the part to the life too, and I will admit that there isn't anything about him to lead to the supposition that he is anything but what he claims to be, excepting that he has rather overdone the thing; he was too easy, too good-natured; a genuine lawyer pursuing such an investigation would not have been apt to be so pleasant."

"Yes, I believe that you are right," the woman remarked, slowly. "His manner was calculated to lull us into the belief that his report would be such a favorable one that we need expect no more trouble."

"Exactly, and his disclosure as to the detective's idea about the conspiracy was designed to show us that he did not place any faith in the surmise."

"Yes, but like many another able actor he overdid his part, and so allowed us to get an idea as to the truth!" Mrs. Englebert exclaimed.

"His frankness has put me on my guard, and now if the fellow succeeds in trapping me he will be much smarter than I think he is!" the Englishman declared in a tone of conviction.

"But is not every point so covered that it will not be possible for any one to make a

discovery?" the woman asked, an anxious look upon her face.

"That is my belief, still one cannot always be certain about such a matter," the other answered in a reflective way.

"The moment the suspicion entered my mind that he was a detective in disguise I hurriedly ran over all the points in my mind, eager to see if there was any weak spot anywhere, but as far as I can see there is not."

"I do not think there is. You planned the scheme too carefully."

"His game now will be to cable to England with the idea of finding out all he can in regard to both of us."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"He did not attempt to cross-examine me in regard to my past career, but that will come in good time. I presume he was afraid to attempt to do so now for fear of exciting my suspicions."

"He questioned me closely enough though," the woman observed.

"I am aware of the fact; none of the conversation that passed between you two escaped me," Rochester remarked. "I had the door slightly open so I could overhear every word."

"Well, suppose that the man is a spy, as you suspect—suppose he does cable to England—he will put himself in communication with the detectives at Scotland Yard, I presume."

"Yes, that will be his game."

"What can he find out about me if he does?" Mrs. Englebert exclaimed in a defiant manner.

"Not a thing beyond what you yourself told him!" the other replied.

"I was an actress, and not a very good one; my parents lived and died exactly as I described, and I defy the keenest-eyed detective to find out any thing crooked in my life."

"And if the fellow has the luck to get on my track, all he will be able to find out is that one George Rochester, who came originally from the town of Stockton-on-Tees, and was for some time a clerk in the banking office of Lambeth & Son, was rather inclined to be fast, to speculate in sure tips on dark horses, and indulge in card and billiard playing, and in these uncertain pursuits he was so fortunate as to be able to give up his clerkship and set up for a gentleman of leisure. Nothing out of the way in that, I am sure!"

"We can afford to laugh then at the efforts of this bloodhound to defeat our game!" the woman declared, but there was an anxious ring in her voice as she spoke.

"Well, it looks as if every point was carefully guarded, but we must not allow ourselves to be lulled into a false sense of security," the Englishman announced in a thoughtful way.

"Oh, no! we must be on the watch, of course, for as the French say, 'It is the unexpected that always happens.'"

"Yes, and with a patient and tireless worker of this kind on the track there is no telling what may happen."

"I have a suspicion that this pretended lawyer is Joe Phenix in person."

The woman looked surprised.

"Do you think so?"

"Yes; I am acquainted with Joe Phenix, you know. He once spoilt a little game that I was working; caught me dead to rights, as these bloodhounds say, and though he is so carefully disguised that I was not able to recognize him, yet there isn't anything strange about that, for he has the reputation of being able to disguise himself so completely that his most intimate acquaintance would be at fault in detecting that he was not a stranger."

"A dangerous man, indeed!" the woman declared.

"Yes, I think so, and although at present I am not able to see what harm he can possibly do, yet it is not pleasant to know that there is a bloodhound of this kind on the watch, eager for an opportunity to do mischief."

"Indeed it is enough to make one anxious!" Mrs. Englebert declared.

"That is my idea, and from the fact that this fellow has been employed it shows that young Englebert is not inclined to give up the money without a struggle."

"And we were congratulating ourselves that we were not going to have any trouble about the matter."

"I know it, but now I see that it was Englebert's game to make us think in that way while the detective did his best to find some weak point in our chain of evidence."

"It was a cunning trick!" the woman declared, angrily.

"Yes; Englebert himself, of course, was not up to a game of the kind. He hasn't sense enough to contrive anything of the sort, but if he hasn't got the brains he has the money to pay other people to think for him, and he was wise enough to put the case in the hands of the best man he could get, which was this Joe Phenix evidently, and by the detective's advice he has been acting."

"It was a lucky thing for us that you suspected the lawyer was a detective in disguise," Mrs. Englebert remarked.

"Yes, or the fellow might have succeeded in getting us into a trap, but, as it is, we are now

on our guard, and I fancy that it will be a difficult matter for him to catch us."

"It is extremely unpleasant though to know that there is a vigilant and persevering foe continually on our track," the woman observed, thoughtfully.

"You are right! To be tracked by a bloodhound, ever on the watch, is extremely disagreeable, and I think we had better follow the plan that the fugitive slaves used to pursue when they discovered that they were trailed by a dog."

"And what was that?"

"They laid in wait for the brute and killed him!" the Englishman declared, with an ugly scowl.

The woman pondered over the suggestion for a few moments before she spoke, her face dark and gloomy.

"If this detective is as able a man as you appear to think him, it will not be an easy task," she suggested.

"I am aware of that; I am not underrating the difficulties of the job," he replied. "That is not my style, you know. I believe that it is always the wisest course to think that your opponent will turn out to be better than you think him instead of being under the mark."

"Oh, there is no doubt about the matter!" Mrs. Englebert declared in a tone of conviction. "And being such an extra good man do you think that it will be possible to get at him?"

"Why not? He is only mortal, you know! As good men as he is have met their doom at the hands of men whom they had pursued until in desperation the game turned and destroyed the hunter!"

"As far as I can see it is much the best thing to be done at the present state of affairs," the Englishman continued.

"While he lives he is a continual menace to us."

"Yes, yes, that is surely the truth!" the woman exclaimed.

"His death renders the success of our plans certain. He is the only obstacle which stands between us and the rich prize which is almost within our grasp."

"Mark you! I do not intend to perform this work myself. I can easily find some desperate fellows in a big city like New York who for a hundred dollars would be willing to murder almost anybody."

"I suppose that there are such wretches in the world," Mrs. Englebert said with a shiver, for hardened as she was the thought of a crime like this terrified her.

"Oh, yes, and I will make it my business to put them on the track of this spy. He shall have a dose of his own medicine!" the Englishman declared with a malignant smile.

CHAPTER XX.

A TRANSPLANT.

THE Englishman was one who believed in acting promptly, and so he at once proceeded to set to work to carry out the scheme which he had formed.

But as he had an idea that he would be "shadowed," he acted with the utmost caution.

In order to put himself in communication with the men who would be likely to take such a job as the removing of the detective would be, it was necessary for him to visit the low dens where such fellows could be found, but it was of the utmost importance that the detective should not be aware of the movement.

Rochester proceeded with extreme caution. In a hand-bag he packed a common suit of clothes, a flannel shirt and an ugly round hat, much the worse for wear.

Then, about five o'clock in the afternoon, he went forth.

He was satisfied that his movements would be watched, and so he took particular pains to see if he could spot the spy.

Careful and cunning as he was, though, he failed in this endeavor.

If there was a shadow on his track, the man performed his task so well that the Englishman was not able to discover him.

"It is very strange," Rochester muttered, quite annoyed at his want of success. "I don't understand it at all. I did not believe that it was possible that any one could play the spy upon me without my being able to detect the fellow."

"Can it be possible that I am not shadowed, after all?"

"My mind would be much easier if I could bring myself to believe that such was the fact, but I doubt its being the truth."

Although in a quandary in regard to this matter, the Englishman proceeded as though he was sure of the fact that he was being shadowed.

"It is my game, though, to act as if I hadn't any suspicion in regard to the matter," he murmured. "For a man is not likely to think a spy is on his track unless he is engaged in some crooked work, and it is my game just now to appear as though there wasn't anything that I desired to conceal."

Acting on this idea the Englishman walked to

Broadway and took a car going up-town, and as he got on board he cast a careless glance behind him with the idea of seeing if he was followed.

But he was not, as far as he could make out. No one boarded the car, nor could he perceive any one hurrying along the sidewalk in order to keep an eye on the vehicle.

"Either I am not watched, or else this spy is a cut above any shadow that I ever encountered," the Englishman remarked after the car had proceeded for a couple of blocks, without any passengers getting on board.

Rochester proceeded up-town as far as Forty-second street; there he alighted and walked through to the Grand Central Depot, where he took a Harlem train, and as it happened he was the last man to pass through the gate, being just in time to catch the train.

"This settles my shadow!" he exclaimed as he got on board of the car. "If I have been tracked, this last move throws the hound off the scent!"

Rochester left the train at Harlem and proceeded to one of the small hotels on Third avenue where he secured a room.

Then he dressed himself in the rough suit of clothes, tied a dingy black handkerchief around his neck, and with a paste preparation which he had in a small box, discolored his chin so that it gave him the appearance of having been recently relieved of a heavy beard.

With the battered-up hat pulled over his eyes he presented a good representation of an Englishman of the dog-fighting stamp.

He waited until the dusk of the evening came and then descended to the street.

Taking the Elevated Road he rode down-town to Houston street, got off there and proceeded to that quarter which is locally termed Murderer's Row, the name bestowed on account of the many deeds of violence which have occurred in the neighborhood.

About every other house is occupied as a saloon, and some of the drinking places have the reputation of being "dives" of the lowest grade, regular "houses of call" for toughs and crooks of all grades.

Into one of the saloons—according to the police the worst one of the lot—the Englishman proceeded.

The interior did not differ from the usual saloon.

There was a bar along one side of the room, and a half a dozen tables on the other.

There were a few ill-looking fellows in the place, drinking and playing cards.

All took a good look at the new-comer as he showed up at the bar, but perceiving that he bore the "ear-marks" of the "gang," they turned their attention to their game again.

Rochester ordered a glass of beer and a sandwich, and after he got the articles sat down at one of the tables and proceeded to discuss the refreshments.

A rather undersized, but muscularly-built fellow, with a forbidding face, almost as much resembling a bulldog's countenance as a man's, sat at the next table.

He was poorly dressed and looked like a man who was having a hard time of it.

This personage surveyed the new-comer for a few minutes with a great deal of attention and then rose and took a seat at the table opposite to where Rochester sat.

"It appears to me that this isn't the first time that I have seen you," the burly fellow remarked.

Rochester took a good look at the other, then he nodded and remarked:

"I think you are right, but it wasn't in this blooming country that we met though."

"You are right there—it was across the her-ring pond."

"In London?"

"Yes, and if I ain't made a mistake the last time we met it was in a public house in Seven Dials where we had a pot of beer together."

The disguised Englishman studied the face of the other intently for a few moments.

"Well, it seems to me that I have met you before," he remarked. "But although your face is familiar to me yet I am not able to call you by name."

"We only came across each other promiskis like," the man replied. "I came in with a pal who knew one of the coves with you, and so we all had some beer. I don't believe you heard my name, but I knew who you were, for my pal put me up to the time of day."

"Yes, I see."

"And I took a good look at you for I knew you were at the top of the heap while I was just a beginner. If I hav'n't made any mistake, you were known as the Dandy Charmer," and the man lowered his voice to a cautious whisper as he spoke.

Rochester gave a quick glance around as if to assure himself that there were no listeners near.

But the rest were busy with their cards, and no one was paying any attention to the two.

"I hav'n't made any mistake 'bout this 'ere thing, have I?" the man queried.

"Well, I suppose that name will fit me as well as any other," the Englishman replied.

"That was about five years ago," the other remarked, in a reflective way. "I had just joined the swell mob then, and wasn't anything more than a beginner, so it was natural for me to take a good look at a man like yourself who was a high-toby cracksmen, and that is the reason why I knew you the moment you came in."

"The country across the water got a little too hot for me and so I got away before the bobbies got a chance to nail me," the Englishman explained.

"Things must have gone badly then for I allers heard that you worked your tricks so nicely it was hardly on the cards for you to be caught."

"The pitcher that goes often to the well is bound to be broken at last, you know," Rochester remarked. "No matter how cunningly a man may plan, he is certain to make a mistake some time, and that is what happened to me; so I left my country for my country's good."

"Same way with me," the other remarked. "I laid a cove out one night with a life-preserver, and as he happened to be a rich bloke, with no end of swell friends, they made London so hot for me that I had to cut and run."

"Well, how have you made out over here?"

"I have not got much to brag on," the man replied. "I ain't done much in a professional way since I came across the water. My reg'lar lay is in the boss line, you know, and I got a job over in Jersey on one of the winter tracks, and then I took a trick once in a while when I saw a good chance, but as I am one of the coves who don't take big chances, allers going in for a sure thing if I can, I can't say as I have done much."

"What is your lay, when you are on the 'cross'?"

"The street business, laying out my man with a club, and then going through him for his mopuses," the other responded.

"Bridle Bill is my name among the coves of the swell-mob," he continued. "Maybe you have heard of me."

"Yes, I think I have. You got that name because you had a trick of putting a bridle on a man, as your pals termed it."

"That was the how of it," the ruffian responded, with a grin.

"My dodge was to steal up ahind a cove wot I wanted to go through, sling my arm around his neck and choke him—put a bridle on him, you see—while I went for his 'ticker' and his 'leather'!"

"And I suppose you strangled the man so that it was not possible for him to cry out?"

"That was my game, and generally it worked right up to the handle."

"How you making out now? You don't look as if you were playing in good luck."

"Well, I ain't, for a fact! I lost my job in the training-stable a month ago and I ha'n't been able to get anything to do since. You see these 'ere racing men ain't got a good opinion of me, and none of them will give me a job."

"How is that?"

"It was all along of a hoss in my stable being got at and doctored. He was the favorite and it was thought that he was sure to win a big race, but some of the bookmaking coves laid a pot of money ag'in' him afore it was known jest how good a hoss he was, and as they were sly blokes they concluded that the best way for them to save their money was to hire some good man to get at the hoss and give him a ball so that he couldn't win."

"And your stablemen suspected that you were the party who did the trick?"

"Blowed if they didn't!" the ruffian cried with an injured air. "And though I swore that I was jest as innocent as a babby, blessed if they didn't give me the sack!"

"And that gave you a black-eye among all the rest of the turfmen, of course?"

"Oh, yes, I couldn't get a job in any stable now, no matter how cheap I would be willing to work."

"It is the old story of give a dog a bad name and hang him!" Rochester observed.

"That is so, and I say, you don't look to be in very fine feather either," the ruffian observed with a glance at the rough attire of the other. "I hope that you ain't down on your luck?"

"I can't say that I am doing particularly well," the Englishman replied. "I manage to get enough to eat and drink though, so I don't suppose I ought to complain. In regard to my togs, a man don't want to rig out like a heavy swell, you know, to come to a boozing ken of this kind, because if he did he would be apt to attract attention that might be unpleasant."

"That is so! Some of the coves would be sure to try for to clean him out."

"Then I am here on a little matter of business."

"Are you on a lay?" the other asked, eagerly.

"Cos if you are, and there is any chance for a man about my size, I hope to goodness you will give me a show!"

"Well, I don't know," Rochester replied, slowly, as if he was debating the matter in his mind. "It is a little bit of business that I am attending to for a friend of mine. The party came to me and wanted that I should under-

take it, but I told him that it was not at all in my line, but, to oblige him, I would get a man to do the job."

"Yes, I see."

"And I was told I could find the man here. I know him by sight, but he isn't here yet. He travels under the name of Spike O'Hoolihan."

"I have heard of him; he used to be a pug, but as he couldn't be trusted not to sell a fight he couldn't find no backers."

"That is the man."

"Well, w'ot is the job? Couldn't I take hold of it?" the ruffian asked, anxiously. "I am sart'in I can handle any game that Spike O'Hoolihan is up to jest as well as he can, and I wouldn't ask no odds of him either any day in the week!"

"Upon my word! I don't see any reason why you wouldn't do!" Rochester exclaimed as though the words of the other had made an impression upon him.

"The party who spoke to me about the matter recommended Spike when he found that I was not inclined to take hold of the job."

"I don't see what difference it will make as to who does the job so long as it is done," the other urged.

"That is true enough."

"Is the stake good?"

"A hundred!"

"I'm your man!" Bridle Bill declared instantly.

"You don't need to wait for Spike to put in an appearance, I will do the job right up to the handle!"

"It is a difficult bit of work!" Rochester warned.

"No more difficult for me than for Spike!" the other replied. "If Spike O'Hoolihan can do the work you can bet all that you can raise that I can do it too, so drive on your apple-cart, and let me know what the game is!"

"Did you ever hear of a detective named Joe Phenix?" the Englishman asked, lowering his voice to a cautious tone as he spoke and casting an earnest glance around so as to be sure that there wasn't any one near enough to overhear the conversation.

But no one in the place was paying any attention to the two.

"Yes, I have heard of the cove."

And from the careless way in which the ruffian spoke Rochester got the idea that Bridle Bill knew but little of the bloodhound, and felt no dread of him.

"He is not a regular detective, you know, not on the police force, but a private cove."

"Oh, yes, I understand! As these Americans say, the woods are full of such blokes."

"Well, this particular man is in the way of the party whom I represent and he wants him settled," and the speaker dropped his voice to a deep whisper as he made the announcement.

"I can do that right up to the handle and no mistake!" Bridle Bill declared in the most emphatic manner. "And I tell you what it is, Dandy, no Spike O'Hoolihan can work a trick of that kind any better than I can. In fact, I doubt if Spike could work the game one-half as well, for it is much more in my line than it is in his," the ruffian added in a boastful way.

"Well, this party will give a hundred to have the detective laid out so that he will not trouble any one any more."

"I will do the trick!"

"This Phenix is a good man, you know," Rochester warned. "He is no slouch, and you will have to work the trick carefully or else you will not be able to do the job."

"Oh, I allers go on the idea that the bloke I am to lay out is an uncommon smart one," the ruffian declared.

"He has an office down-town and he lives in Thirty-fifth street, just east of Second avenue," and Rochester gave the number.

"That is all right!" the ruffian declared, "I have got it down in my head and that is the best kind of a memorandum-book! Once I get a thing into my noddle it stays there you had better believe!"

"There is no hurry about this job, you know, you can take your own time," the Englishman suggested.

"Yes, but I think the quicker the trick can be pulled off the better."

"Well, the sooner it is done, the sooner you will get your hundred," the other suggested.

"But I would advise you to proceed slowly, and not to make a move until you are sure of your ground."

"I know that this Joe Phenix is an extra good man, and unless you are careful to arrange the matter so that he will not have any chance for his life he will be apt to get the best of you."

"Don't you be afeard of that, old pal!" the ruffian exclaimed. "I will go on the idea that he is as good a man as ever walked in shoe-leather!"

"I never make the mistake of thinking that the man I am arter is a duffer who can be settled without any trouble."

"You are wise to avoid that error, for many a good man has come to grief by making a mistake of that kind."

"Here is ten dollars on account," and Roches-

ter gave the money to the other, who received it with eagerness.

"Just keep this matter to yourself, you know, for it is a thing that ought not to be talked about."

"Oh, that is all right. I am one of the dumbest men in the world when it comes to business!" the ruffian asserted. "Don't you be skeered 'bout my opening my 'tatar-trap! I know too much for that. These detectives allers stick together, and if I succeed in laying this Joe Phenix out the other coves will do all they kin to make it hot for me."

"Undoubtedly!"

And then Rochester arranged a means of communication—the ruffian stopped at one of the cheap hotels on Park Row, well-known to the police as a resort for crooks—and the interview came to an end.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ATTACK.

It was Joe Phenix's idea when he made the revelation to the Englishman in regard to the conspiracy that the plotters would be tempted to attack him.

The game was an old one with the detective. The scheme to get at the Englebert money had been planned with such exceeding care that even the acute bloodhound was puzzled to know how to get at the conspirators so as to unmask them.

He had cabled to England to one of the chief detectives of the metropolis—a gentleman with whom he had once been associated in a professional way when the Londoner chased a notorious offender across the ocean—and the reply he received afforded him no information.

In fact it confirmed the woman's story, and all that the London detective could say of George Rochester was that he was a fast young man about town, and though he was known to have kept bad company, yet he had never got into any difficulties.

"It is as I suspected," Joe Phenix mused after he received the information. "This man is an extra smart rascal who has been shrewd enough to manage matters so he was not caught by the English police, and I, undoubtedly, will have a hard job to entrap him."

"Unless I am especially favored by some lucky accident, the only chance I will have to catch him will be if he is unable to resist the temptation to strike a blow at me and so expose himself."

And the detective felt pretty well satisfied that the conspirators, alarmed by the disclosures which he had made, would be apt to try to get at him.

He knew that it would be an easy matter for them to find out what particular detective young Englebert had employed, but in order to make sure that the parties should have the knowledge, Joe Phenix took the trouble to call upon Counselor Have and tell that gentleman that he had been employed to look into the matter.

The lawyer was surprised, and did not hesitate to express his opinion that Mr. Maurice Englebert was wasting his money, but added though that it was nobody's business but his own.

Joe Phenix had already been noted for being one of those men who while not apparently paying any particular attention to what was going on around them yet managed to see everything.

And now that he anticipated an attack he was more on the alert than ever.

So it happened that when he left the house one morning his attention was attracted to a shabbily dressed man, with a green shade over his eyes, and some lead-pencils in his hand who had sat down, apparently to rest, on the step of the next house to the one where Joe Phenix resided.

Now the detective as well as any man in the city knew that nine out of every ten of these mendicants are imported, who trade on the credulity of the public, yet the moment he came up to the man he stopped, fumbled in his pockets until he found a couple of pennies which he dropped in the outstretched hand of the supposed blind man, who whined out his thanks in the true professional way.

The detective bestowed this offering so that he might have an opportunity to examine the fellow, and as he turned away, Joe Phenix muttered:

"A plant, for a thousand dollars! But I have got you down fine, my man, and I will not have any difficulty in knowing you again, no matter where I may see you!"

It was the detective's idea that he would run across the fellow again.

His supposition was correct.

When he left his office that noon for lunch the man was in the corridor but dressed in a different suit of clothes, the green shade was removed, and he had a piece of paper in his hand upon which a direction was evidently written, for he had halted at the door of the detective's office and was comparing the inscription on the paper with the detective's sign as Joe Phenix came out.

"I beg your Honor's pardon," he said, ducking his head and scraping his foot after the sailor

fashion, "but can you tell me where I can find Mr. Richard Phenix of the yacht Gleam?"

"No such person here that I know of."

"That 'ere sign says Phenix!" the man exclaimed, pretending to be puzzled, and scratching his head.

"Joseph Phenix; that is my name, but I don't know any Richard Phenix, nor anything about any yacht."

"I was told to come to Wall street. I put down the name, but not the number, thinking I could carry it in my head, but it is clean gone, so I axed a man in one of the shops, and he looked at the paper and inter a big book and then told me to come here."

"He made a mistake; there is no Richard Phenix here."

"Sorry to trouble your Honor; I s'pose I will have to go down to the dock ag'in," and then, with another duck of the head and a scrappa of the foot, the man departed.

The detective smiled grimly; he was pleased that his anticipation had been so quickly fulfilled.

"The fellow has taken the job of attacking me," he soliloquized. "And as I am a stranger to him, he wants to be sure of his game before he makes a move."

"It is wonderful how well this old trick of mine works."

"Now then, I must try to arrange this matter so I will be able to capture the man without having to call upon the police for aid, and the question immediately arises, how will the attack be made?"

"The fellow is an Englishman, I should judge; either the knife or a bludgeon, then, is likely to be the weapon used, for these British transplants seldom use firearms."

"I must post Western, and we will see if we can fix up a trap for this party."

After lunch the detective held a consultation with his assistant, and a scheme was soon arranged.

When business ended that day Joe Phenix did not proceed to his home as usual, but went up-town and took dinner at one of the popular restaurants.

Then he visited the different hotels, whiling away the time until the theaters began, one of which he visited, and remained until the performance ended, then he sauntered into a noted resort and remained there until the hands of the clocks pointed to midnight.

It was his idea that the unknown would be apt to lay in wait for him that night, and he wanted to postpone the attack to so late an hour that there would not be any chance for anybody being around to interfere in the matter.

It was just midnight when the detective started for home, and after leaving the main thoroughfare he found that the streets were deserted.

Only one pedestrian did he encounter in half-a-dozen blocks.

He turned the corner of the street in which his house was situated.

The block was dark—not a light shone from any of the houses on either side of the way.

All had retired to rest.

The gas lights alone dispelled the gloom.

Joe Phenix came on at a leisurely pace; if there was any one in the street waiting to assault him he wanted to afford the party a favorable opportunity.

But although from the way in which he advanced no one would suppose that he suspected danger menaced him, yet all his senses were on the alert.

He fancied that the game would be for the man to conceal himself in some dark corner and then approach him in the rear after he had passed.

So, while apparently sauntering along, free from care, the lynx-eyed detective was keenly on the watch; and when he came within three doors of his own dwelling, he noticed the dark form crouching in the shadow of a doorway, and listening with his well-trained ears—acute almost as the ears of an Indian brave—was able to distinguish the sound of the stealthy footsteps following him so closely.

Suddenly the detective turned.

CHAPTER XXII.

CATCHING A TARTAR.

HE was just in time; not a second too soon had he wheeled around, for the ruffian who had stolen up behind him had his arm raised to strike.

In his hand he had the favorite weapon of the English Thug, a short, leather club loaded with lead at the butt-end, and with a loop at the other which passed around the wrist of the man who wielded the weapon.

Joe Phenix's prompt and unexpected movement took the fellow completely by surprise, and before the man could make a motion the iron-limbed detective grasped the wrist of the hand which wielded the "life-preserver," so as to intercept the blow, and with his other hand Joe Phenix took the ruffian by the throat and with a sudden spring bringing his weight to bear upon the other bore him to the pavement.

The fellow, although a powerful, muscular

man, was taken at such a complete disadvantage that he was not able to offer any effectual resistance.

Joe Phenix's strong hand choked him so that he was not able to cry out even if he had been disposed to give an alarm, and despite all the resistance he could offer the man was soon choked so that his head swam and his senses reeled.

The moment he perceived that the fellow was weakening the detective turned his head to call his assistant, Western, who had been in waiting, concealed under the stoop of Joe Phenix's house.

But slight as had been the noise of the scuffle it had not failed to reach the acute ears of Tony Western and when the detective turned his head he found that his assistant was at his side.

"I have the fellow all right!" the detective remarked, speaking in the most matter-of-fact tones, as though it was a common thing for him to go through little experiences of this kind.

"Get out your gag and put it in his mouth while I snap the bracelets on!" the detective continued. "We must hurry up and get him out of the way before a policeman comes along, for it isn't my game to give this fellow up to the law."

By this time the man had been choked so near to insensibility that he had almost ceased to struggle, and he only offered a faint resistance when Western forced a pear-shaped gag into his mouth, Joe Phenix at the same time snapping a pair of steel handcuffs upon his wrists.

Then the two lifted the man up bodily and carried him into the house of the detective, entering by the basement door.

All this had really occupied less time than it has taken to tell about it.

Not a soul stepped foot within the block from the beginning of the struggle to the end, and when a policeman came leisurely along some five minutes later he had no suspicion of the stirring incident which had occurred but a short time before.

There was a gas lamp burning in the entry of the dwelling, so the detectives could see what they were about.

Down the cellar stairs they carried the prisoner, and then, through a secret passageway, built in the wall, and so cunningly contrived that its existence would never be suspected, they proceeded to a sub-cellar which had been constructed under the original one.

Joe Phenix had swung a lantern on his arm before descending the cellar stairs so as to have light.

The sub-cellar was about as dismal a place as the mind of man could conceive; it was more like the old-time dungeons, which existed beneath the ancient castles than aught else.

Into this gloomy den the light of day never came.

The air was dense, damp, and chilly, and seemed to possess the peculiar property of striking straight through the flesh to the bones.

There wasn't anything in this gloomy hole but a bundle of damp straw in one corner, and a couple of old boxes which were evidently intended to be used as chairs.

The prisoner was unceremoniously dumped upon the heap of straw, the gag removed from his mouth, the lantern suspended to a hook driven in one of the side walls and then the detectives seated themselves upon the boxes to wait for the man to recover his senses.

Although the choking had been a severe one yet it did not take long for the strong and vigorous ruffian to get over the shock.

As the detective had anticipated, the assailant was the man whom he had twice encountered on that day, the blind man with the pencils and the supposed sailor who had accosted him at the door of his office.

The reader too doubtless has recognized the man, for it was the redoubtable Bridle Bill who had been so anxious to undertake the job of putting the detective out of the way and had been so sanguine in regard to his ability to accomplish the feat.

And now as he rose to a sitting posture and glanced about him upon the strange surroundings the look of deep disgust which was on his countenance made his face look more brutal and repulsive than usual.

The man was thoroughly amazed, and it was evident from the expression upon his countenance that he did not know what to make of the peculiar circumstances.

He surveyed the gloomy surroundings in profound astonishment; the handcuffs upon his wrists did not surprise him though.

His attempt to lay out the detective had failed—he had caught a Tartar, and it was only natural for the man-hunter to adorn his wrists with the steel bracelets, but why he had been brought to such a gloomy den was a mystery.

It was not a prison cell—if he had awoke from his insensibility in a jail he would not have been surprised, for under the circumstances it would be the most natural thing in the world for the detective to clap him behind the bars, but this work was a complete puzzle.

Joe Phenix and his assistant did not speak,

but watched the movements of the ruffian as though he was some wild animal on exhibition.

Finding that his captors were not disposed to speak, Bridle Bill began the conversation.

"Well, w'ot is the meaning of this 'ere thing, anyway?" he inquired in a sulky way.

"I am not exactly certain that I understand what you mean," Joe Phenix observed in his calm, matter-of-fact tones.

"W'ot have you brought me here for? That is plain enough, ain't it?" the ruffian explained, angrily.

He was completely disgusted by the utter failure of his attack.

"Who are you?" the detective demanded, abruptly.

"W'ot is that to you?" the fellow replied in an insolent manner.

"Well, it does not make much difference. If you don't want to introduce yourself it is all right."

"W'ot kind of a game is this that you are playing?" Bridle Bill asked, with a questioning glance around.

"Oh, come now, you must not ask questions if you object to answering when questions are put to you," the detective retorted.

"I think I have got a right to ask when it comes to playing a game like this on a man!" the ruffian declared in a sullen way. "You have clapped the darbies on my wrists, but this ain't no prison by a jugful!"

"Oh, yes, it is," Joe Phenix replied.

"That's a lie!" the other exclaimed, promptly. "You mustn't try to fool me on no game of that kind, you know. I know the inside of a cell when I see it!"

"Yes, I have no doubt that you have had a deal of experience in that line," the detective retorted.

"That is another lie!" Bridle Bill cried, indignant at the insinuation.

"Oh, no, it isn't! You have seen the inside of more jails than you have fingers and toes!" Joe Phenix declared.

"You are a stranger to me but I know just what kind of a man you are by the cut of your jib," the detective continued.

"You are a transplant from across the water, an English jail-bird, and although this is our first meeting yet I know you as well as though I had snapped the bracelets on you a dozen times!"

"Oh, yes, you are an awful smart man—in your mind!" the other retorted.

"You will have to admit that I was smart enough to spoil your little game," the detective remarked.

"Maybe I will get even with you for this thing before either of us is much older!" the ruffian exclaimed in an ugly way.

"Maybe you will, but I doubt it!" Joe Phenix declared.

"But we are wasting time while we ought to be getting down to business," the detective continued.

The ruffian stared for he did not comprehend what the speaker meant.

"Business!" he exclaimed. "W'ot do you mean? W'ot kind of business are you talking about?"

"Why, I want a little information out of you," the detective replied.

"Well, you won't get it!" the other retorted.

"I can tell you that right at the beginning!" "I do not doubt that you think that is correct but I am sure you will change your mind before you are many hours older."

"You can bet all that you are worth that I won't!" the ruffian declared.

"I think you will change your mind about that during the next four and twenty hours."

"Oh, no I won't!" the other replied, doggedly.

"Well, time will settle that question and since you are not disposed to be agreeable, there isn't any use of our wasting our time here," and Joe Phenix rose to his feet.

Western followed his example.

"Take the lantern!" the detective commanded.

"A few hours in solitude and darkness may induce him to be reasonable."

Western advanced toward the lantern.

"Hold on! w'ot are you about?" cried the ruffian in alarm. "You ain't a going to take the light away and leave me in this infernal hole in the darkness?"

"That is my little game," Joe Phenix responded. "When I get hold of a man of your kind who is disposed to be ugly I do my best to convince him that he cannot make anything by playing a game of that sort."

"You are in the net, you know, and if you are wise you will make the best terms you can."

The prisoner pondered over the matter for a few moments and Western perceiving that he was inclined to "weaken" did not take down the lantern.

"W'ot do you want, anyway?" he asked in a sullen tone.

"If you are disposed to talk the matter over we may as well sit down again," Joe Phenix remarked, and then the two resumed their seats.

"Well, I don't s'pose it will do any harm for me to find out w'ot you want," the ruffian remarked. "But I don't understand this 'ere thing at all."

"A few words of explanation will set your

mind at rest," the detective remarked. "In the first place, I want to know why you picked me out for a victim?"

"Yes, but w'ot right have you got to ask sich a question—you ain't no 'beak'!" the ruffian exclaimed.

"Oh, I know I am not a magistrate, but I can put you through an examination just as well as if I were one," Joe Phenix replied. "In fact, I have got you in a tighter place here than any police justice would be apt to put you, and if you don't answer my questions you will find that I will put the screws on you in a way you will despise."

"But this 'ere is all a'gin' the law!" Bridle Bill protested, indignantly.

"You are a nice kind of a man to talk about anything being against the law!" the detective exclaimed. "But as far as you are concerned it does not matter a straw whether it is against the law or not."

"I have got you foul and I intend to make you do as I want, or else put you through a course of sprouts which will be apt to be extremely uncomfortable!"

The ruffian glanced angrily at the detective, this exceedingly plain speaking angered him greatly.

"S'pose I don't do as you want, w'ot can you do, anyway?" Bridle Bill cried, in a dogged and defiant manner.

"Keep you here in the darkness without anything to eat or drink until you make up your mind to give in," the detective replied, in the coolest possible way.

For a few moments the ruffian gazed open-mouthed at the speaker.

He could hardly bring himself to believe that his ears had not deceived him.

"Why this 'ere is the most outrageous thing that I ever heard of!" he declared. "No beak would dare to do a think of the kind!"

"Of course not! I know that well enough," the detective answered. "There would be a precious row kicked up if any magistrate, or police justice, should try a thing of the kind."

"But it is an old game of mine though, and I always use it when I get hold of a man who is inclined to be obstinate. It is a remarkable fact too that of all the men whom I have tried it on I have never found one yet who did not weaken in the long run."

"I am aware that it is really taking an unfair advantage, and it is one that the law would not justify, but then I only try it on men who have defied the law, and after a man has done that sort of thing he has no business to complain if his rights are not protected as they ought to be."

"I fitted up this place on purpose to put refractory prisoners through a course of sprouts."

"Now, if I had gone to work in a regular way in your case I would have turned you over to a policeman and you would have been lugged off to jail."

"There you would be examined and probably identified, but it would not be possible for any one to get the truth out of you in regard to this attack if you did not choose to speak."

"You would be punished for your attempted assault on me, but that would not reach the point that I am after. I am anxious to know who put you up to this job, and I intend to get the truth out of you in some way!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

BROUGHT TO BOOK.

THE ruffian pondered over the situation for a good five minutes before he made a reply.

He was a dull-witted fellow, but for all that he had sense enough to see that his captor was thoroughly in earnest.

That he was completely in the power of the other was evident—that the detective meant to improve the advantage which he had gained was plain, and Bridle Bill could not see any way to escape from the trap into which he had fallen.

But with the obstinacy natural to all men of his stamp he resolved not to give the detective the information he desired if he could possibly avoid it, hoping to be able to deceive him by a cunningly devised lie.

Joe Phenix did not attempt to hurry his captive.

The fish was on the hook, and he was content to give the prey all the time he desired, but the acute detective made a shrewd guess at the thoughts which were passing in the other's mind.

During the course of his long career as a detective he had encountered a large number of just such scoundrels, as his prisoner, and knew that when they were cornered, and realized that brute force was of no avail, they always tried to get out of the scrape by the use of low cunning.

So the detective was prepared to have the ruffian attempt to lie out of the matter.

"Well, I don't know why I shouldn't speak," the fellow remarked at last; "I haven't got much to say."

"It will not take you long to tell it then," the detective observed.

"But, my friend, let me caution you before you commence that it will be a great deal better to tell the truth than to attempt to lie about the matter, for I am an old bird, not one of the

kind to be caught by chaff, and the moment you try to deceive me by a falsehood I shall discover it, so any attempt of that kind will not profit you in the least; all that it will amount to will be to use up time, for in the end I will surely have the truth out of you."

"I ain't a-going to tell you nothing but the truth!" Bridle Bill exclaimed, in a sulky way.

He was amazed that the acute detective should make so shrewd a guess with regard to his intentions, but the warning did not induce him to make any change in his plans, for like the majority of men of low intellects he fancied he was wonderfully cunning, and believed he could deceive the detective without any trouble.

"Just you stick to the truth!" Joe Phenix exclaimed. "You will find that it will pay you better to do so than to attempt to trick me by any lies."

"Oh, I will give it to you as straight as a string!" the man protested. "But as I said afore, I ain't got much to tell."

"So much the better; it will take less time," the detective observed.

"You see, I am a man who is down on his luck," the fellow explained, endeavoring to assume an appearance of thorough honesty. "I am a stone-mason by trade, and I have not been in this country long—I am an Englishman, you see."

"Yes, I guessed as much. What is your name?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Baker—William Baker."

"And what do your pals call you?"

"Eh?" and the Englishman put on a stupid look, pretending not to understand.

"What is your professional name?—all you fellows who are on the cross usually have an alias."

"I ain't got any!" the other replied. "All my pals call me plain Billy Baker, and nothing else!"

"We will let it pass; it does not matter. I don't think you are telling the truth, though," the detective asserted.

"Wish I may die if I ha'n't!" the ruffian exclaimed.

"Go ahead! it is not material."

"Well, as I was saying, I have had hard work to get along since I came to this country, and as I was completely run out of money to-day I thought I would try and help myself to a little to-night, so I laid in wait in a dark corner, with the idea of making a raise out of some cove w'ot might come along."

"And that is the reason you attacked me?"

"Yes."

"Now, after I took the trouble to give you a warning, what is the use of telling me any such ridiculous yarn as this?" Joe Phenix asked, impatiently.

"I told you that lying wouldn't do you any good!"

"Tain't no lie!" the ruffian declared, doggedly.

"Oh, yes, it is! and from the fact that you think you can impose on me with any such tale it is apparent that you have an extremely poor opinion of my powers of discernment, and I must say I am rather astonished by the circumstance, for although you are unknown to me, and are a stranger in the country, yet your pals ought to have put you up to the time of day, and any cross-man who knows me, either personally or by reputation, should have been able to tell you that I am about the last man in the world who could be deceived by any tale of this kind."

"I ain't trying no game!" the ruffian declared, endeavoring to assume as honest an expression as possible.

"You attacked me then simply because you thought you could win a stake out of me?"

"That's the truth, and no mistake!"

"And I suppose you don't know who I am?"

"Of course I don't! How should I know?"

"You did not play the spy this morning on my house as a blind beggar with lead pencils?"

"No, I didn't!" Bridle Bill responded, doggedly.

He was evidently disgusted by this revelation, for although he suspected there was a chance that the detective might have recognized in him the man who was inquiring in the neighborhood of his office for the mythical Richard Phenix, yet he had not anticipated that the other had noticed him in the morning.

"And then in order to make sure that I was the man you wanted, you came to my office," the detective continued. "It would have been all right, of course, if you had succeeded in laying me out, but as you didn't, it may be considered that you made the biggest kind of a blunder."

"But I understand how you came to do it. You were hired to lay me out, and as I was a stranger, you wanted to be certain in regard to my identity; but this precaution on your part has got you into a hole, and now the best thing you can do is to make a clean breast of it."

"I know that you are an English crook—I know that you were paid to assault me, and I am going to keep you in this dungeon until I get the truth out of you!"

"If you were to keep me here for ten years I wouldn't tell you any different story from w'ot

"I have told you!" the ruffian declared, in a dogged and defiant manner.

"I see that it would be only a waste of time to bother with you," Joe Phenix remarked, again rising to his feet.

"A little wholesome fasting in the dark will be apt to induce you to change your mind. If it does not, you will be able to boast that you are the first crook who has ever been able to stand the test.

"Hunger and thirst are both strong arguments, and few men are able to hold out against them.

"You may be able to stand it for a day or two if you are an extra good man, but it will not do you any good, for in the end you will have to give in.

"I am confident about this matter, you know, because I have had ugly and determined fellows in this hole before," the detective continued in his calm, judicial way.

"Men who swear that they would rather stay here until they rotted than give in, and when they made the declaration they meant it, too, but they did not understand how terrible the pangs of hunger and thirst are to bear.

"The stoutest one of the lot only stood it for three days, and then he was glad to give in."

The expression upon the face of the ruffian showed how deep was the impression that the words of the detective made upon him.

"Blamed if you hadn't ought to be killed for playing a rig like this on a man!" he declared, in impotent anger.

"The end justifies the means," the detective retorted! "And with men of your stamp it would not be possible to get the truth from them if some game of this kind was not worked.

"You will come to your milk all in good time," the bloodhound continued. "And I would be willing to bet that before you have been here for four and twenty hours you will come to the conclusion that it is better to betray your employer than to hunger and thirst!"

While the detective had been speaking the ruffian had been meditating over the situation.

That his captor meant what he said was evident, and despite all his bravado Bridle Bill shrunk from the test.

"S'pose I tried to give you some p'int, w'ot will you do for me?" he demanded.

"Oh, come now! you are not situated so as to make conditions," Joe Phenix retorted. "You tell your story and on that will depend my action in a great measure, but I am not going to make any promises before I get the particulars."

And then, as the ruffian did not see any other chance for him, he made a full confession, revealing how he had been hired to put the detective out of the way by the English crook whom he only knew as the Dandy Charmer."

"And you don't know his right name?" Joe Phenix asked.

"No, that is all I ever heard him called." Then Bridle Bill explained how he was to communicate with the crook.

It did not take the detective long to think out a plan, and Bridle Bill, now thoroughly subdued, was only too eager to do what the detective required.

"I think the Dandy would murder me though if he knew I had put up a job like this on him!" the ruffian exclaimed.

"Don't worry! I'll have the bracelets on him before long!" the detective replied.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOT ON THE TRAIL.

BEING in possession of the fact that it was an English crook named the Dandy Charmer, who had plotted his death, gave Joe Phenix something to work upon.

But who was the Dandy Charmer?

That was a point upon which light was needed.

The detective had never heard of any such man. It was evident that he was a stranger in the country or else Joe Phenix would have certainly heard of him, for he had as large an acquaintance among crooks as any detective in the country.

The reason for the attack was perfectly apparent.

The parties who were working the scheme by means of which they hoped to get hold of a goodly share of the dead money-king's wealth had made the discovery that he—the detective—had been retained on the case, and fearing he would succeed in blocking their game they had resolved to have him put out of the way.

This was exactly what Joe Phenix had expected, and in order to induce the scoundrels to make such a move was why he had confided to the Englishman the suspicions which he had formed concerning the matter.

His ruse had been successful.

The schemers had immediately taken the alarm and set to work to strike a deadly blow at the bloodhound who had been cute enough to "get on" to their game.

The Englishman who called himself George Rochester was at the bottom of the matter undoubtedly.

It might be possible that he was the English crook, the Dandy Charmer.

He was just the kind of man whom such a title would fit.

The man was a rascal in the detective's opinion, and he felt just as sure of this fact as though he had the proofs at hand to confirm the statement.

It was possible though, of course, that he was not the crook, but had employed the Dandy Charmer to put the detective out of the way.

One point Joe Phenix felt pretty certain of, and that was the Englishman was the master-spirit of the conspiracy, an extra shrewd and able rascal, and one whom it would be difficult to trap, so the detective made up his mind to proceed with uncommon caution.

He felt that he was engaged in a struggle in which he could not afford to throw away a single chance.

Success had crowned his first effort. He had induced the conspirators to strike at him and had not only succeeded in parrying the blow but in capturing the ruffian who made the attack.

He was in possession of the name of the man who had hired the bully, but the detective was shrewd enough to see that he had not obtained anything but a slight clew, for the Dandy Charmer had apparently anticipated that something might go wrong and taken measures so that it would not be an easy matter for any one to get at him.

He had arranged with Bridle Bill for the ruffian to leave a note with the barkeeper of the saloon, where the interview between the two had taken place, when the latter wanted to communicate with him.

The note was to be directed to D. Charmer.

He had spoken to the barkeeper in regard to the matter, and that worthy, used to affairs of the kind, said it would be all right.

The game that the detective had resolved to play was a simple one.

He was going to make the conspirators believe that the ruffian had succeeded in his talk—that is, he, Joe Phenix, had been waylaid and badly hurt, so much so that it was doubtful if he would recover from his injuries.

If he had thought he would be able to trust the English ruffian he could have arranged an excellent game, but long experience had satisfied him that no dependence whatever could be placed in any such man as he was.

When such a fellow was caught in a tight place, he would be certain to promise all sorts of things to enable him to get out of the scrape, but the moment he was free the chances were a hundred to one that he would do his best to defeat the plans of the man who trusted him.

Having ascertained that the Dandy Charmer was not familiar with the handwriting of the ruffian, Joe Phenix saw that it would be an easy matter for him to write in the Englishman's name, and in order to make sure that Bridle Bill would not betray the secret, he had him shipped on board of a steamer bound for England the next day.

The ruffian was glad to go, for he had had enough of America he said.

The morning newspapers contained an account of the attack on Joe Phenix, and all the articles represented the detective as having been seriously injured by an unknown assailant.

Doctor Mairstone was the physician called to attend to the sufferer and he gave his opinion that there was grave doubt as to whether Joe Phenix would ever recover from his wounds.

And so careful was the acute Joe Phenix about this matter that he did not even allow the regular detectives, who came to see him in order to learn the particulars of the assault, to know the truth.

Joe Phenix received the bloodhounds in bed, his head all swathed in bandages, conversed with them in a faint tone of voice and sent them away with the impression that he was a very sick man indeed.

The superintendent of police, who was a personal friend of the great detective, instructed his subordinates to spare no pains to capture the miscreant who had committed the assault.

Joe Phenix had given a pretty good description of Bridle Bill. His story of the affair was that his assailant would undoubtedly have killed him had not his assistant, Tony Western, happened to come up the street in the opposite direction just at the moment of the attack.

Primed with this story all the detectives sought their "stool-pigeons," as the men and women of unsavory reputation are termed who act as spies, and set on foot inquiries in regard to Bridle Bill, so that by noon of the day which succeeded the night on which Joe Phenix was attacked, about all the crooks in the city, and their hangers-on, not only knew all the particulars of the assault, but were posted in regard to the man who was "wanted."

A number of the crooks and stool-pigeons knew the Englishman, and diligent search was made for him, for all the detectives resented the attack made on Phenix, and they strained every nerve to catch the offender.

Their reasoning was that the crooks must be taught that it was a dangerous thing to attack a bloodhound of the law.

If Bridle Bill had remained in New York he surely would have been caught, for there were plenty of the stool-pigeons who knew him and would not have hesitated to put the detectives on his track.

The first act of his play having come to a successful conclusion—the deceiving of the world in regard to his condition—Joe Phenix went ahead on the second.

Now he was to play the role of an English thief, a supposed pal of Bridle Bill.

The change that the detective made in his personal appearance was wonderful.

He put on a short-haired, brown-black wig, the hair of which manifested a desire to twist itself into a kinky curl; the wig was constructed so as to cover up two-thirds of the broad, high forehead of the detective, and was so skillfully made that it would have bothered the most expert hair "artist" to have detected that it was not natural.

Then the bloodhound arrayed himself in a rough suit, the coat and vest of which were cut so peculiarly in the neck that it made him look round-shouldered, and also gave him the appearance of being bull-necked, as the saying is.

Finally the detective applied a dye to his skin which gave him a regular olive hue, and made him fit the name which he had assumed, Gypsy Jack.

His disguise was so complete that his nearest and dearest friend, or his most bitter and unrelenting enemy, would never have recognized him.

The detective was always a careful man, but on this occasion, realizing that he was after bigger game than usual, he was taking unusual precautions.

After assuming his disguise he wrote a letter, taking pains to pen it in a cramped hand, such as a man like Bridle Bill might be supposed to write.

The letter ran as follows:

"Old pal, D. C. I have done the trick, but there has been such a row that I am going to keep shady until the thing blows over. I send this by a pal of mine whom I can trust, Gypsy Jack. You can pay the mopuses over to him, so no more from yourn to command. B. B."

The detective waited until the shades of darkness covered in the metropolis, and then he went to a saloon in Murderer's Row, got a drink at the bar, and watched an opportunity when no one was within hearing to give the letter to the bartender.

"Mebbe the party will come in and get the letter to-night," he said. "I don't know the bloke myself, for I am acting for a friend who is under the weather just now and wants me to attend to this little matter for him, so if the party asks for Baker, jest say that he ain't able to come himself and has sent me—Gypsy Jack, that's my name—in his place."

"All right," responded the bartender, who was used to all sorts of crooked work of this kind and took it as a matter of course.

Then the detective took a seat to wait for developments.

He had little idea though that the crook who rejoiced in the name of the Dandy Charmer would come for the letter himself, although he had conveyed that idea to the bartender.

"If he is the first-class man that I take him to be he will not take any chances, although everything appears to be all right," the detective mused. "He will send for his letter and not come in person."

CHAPTER XXV.

A SET-BACK.

JOE PHENIX confidently expected that someone would come for the letter that night, because it would be natural for Bridle Bill to try and get his money as soon as possible, as he had performed his part of the agreement, and the Dandy Charmer, understanding this, would undoubtedly expect to hear from the ruffian.

The bartender had placed the letter on the shelf elaborately ornamented with bottles and glasses, behind the bar—had stuck it in between two bottles at the end of the shelf nearest the door.

The disguised detective had taken a seat so that he had a good view of the letter, for he knew the bartender to be a slippery customer, and although the man did not act as if his suspicions had been excited in anyway—in fact, he did not appear to take the slightest interest in the matter either one way or the other, yet it was the detective's creed that a man in his line of business must be constantly on the watch for treachery and double-dealing.

It was almost half-past eight when Joe Phenix arrived in the saloon and for over an hour nothing occurred.

The detective whiled away the time by drinking a couple of glasses of beer, ate a sandwich and read an old newspaper which happened to be on the table.

Quite a number of crooks and stool-pigeons came in besides regular and transient customers who were not on the cross, and three detective's sauntered into the saloon while the disguised bloodhound kept his vigil, and though the crooks, the stool-pigeons, and the detectives cast curious glances at the olive-skinned stran-

ger none of them recognized, or apparently suspected that there was anything out of the way in regard to him.

At a quarter to ten a poorly-dressed woman, wearing an old, calico wrapper and with a shawl wrapped around her head, after the fashion of the tenement-house dweller came into the saloon, put a tin pail on the end of the counter and evidently asked for beer, as the bartender proceeded to fill it from the beer-taps at the other end of the counter.

Then she tendered a bill in payment, and at the same moment were three other customers ranged up at the middle of the counter, so the bartender had his hands full.

He served the customers before he brought the woman her change, and then she departed.

As the reader who has followed the fortunes of Joe Phenix, as depicted in the various tales in which he has played so prominent a part, will remember, the detective was one of those men who possessed the wonderful faculty of seeing everything while apparently not paying any attention to what was going on around him.

So, on the present occasion, while not being particular to watch the woman, for there wasn't anything about her to attract notice, yet the fact that she kept the shawl so tightly over her face that it was not possible to make out what she was like, made the detective take a good look at her, for, as a rule, the women who "rush the growler"—to use the cant New York expression for going for beer—do not care who see their faces, a crowded bar-room possessing no terrors for their souls.

This peculiarity, slight as it was, attracted the detective's attention, and so he took a second glance at the woman as she departed with her beer, and his experienced eyes detected that she moved with an ease and grace which suggested youth and good breeding.

And then just as the woman passed through the door Joe Phenix noticed that the letter was gone.

It was in its place when the woman entered; the disguised detective was certain in regard to this fact, and now it had disappeared.

From where the woman stood it would be an easy matter for her to read the inscription upon the letter and possess herself of the mis-sive.

Immediately Joe Phenix jumped to the conclusion that she was the messenger sent by the Dandy Charmer to get the letter.

The purchase of the beer was but a pretext. If the letter had not been in sight she would have asked for it, but when she discovered that it was within her reach she concluded it would be best for her to take the letter quietly without saying anything to anybody about it.

There was a possibility of course that the woman had not been sent for the letter but had stolen it, this idea came to the mind of Joe Phenix but he did not consider that it was probable.

The letter was of no value to any one but the man for whom it was intended, and the temptation would be extremely small for any one to steal it.

The detective thought the odds greatly in favor of the first supposition, so, rising to his feet, he sauntered out of the saloon.

He intended to play the spy upon the woman. When he got out of the saloon the first glance he gave around revealed to his eyes the form of the shawled woman proceeding toward the Bowery.

"Now then the odds are a hundred to one that this party will be on the alert to see whether she is shadowed or not, and if she catches sight of one coming on in her rear she will be certain to jump to the conclusion that I am a spy, so I must be careful to work it so that she will not see me!" the detective muttered as he hesitated for a moment in front of the saloon.

Then he crossed rapidly to the other side of the street.

The movement was performed just in time, for hardly had he gained the sidewalk, when the woman cast a rapid glance over her shoulder.

The detective noted the movement and chuckled to himself.

"Aha, madam I do not doubt in the least that you are just about as smart as they make 'em and though you have played the game in an exceedingly skillful manner so far, yet you are not quite expert enough to take every trick. He mused as he followed her leisurely along, keeping a good watch upon the woman's movements although he was on the inner side of the walk partially screened from view by the people passing up and down between him and the curbstone.

The woman was apparently satisfied that she was not shadowed, for she did not look behind again until she came to the corner of the street, and there she cast another rapid glance behind.

Again Joe Phenix chuckled.

"Cunning as you are, I defy you to detect that a shadow is on your track this time!" he declared.

She was apparently satisfied that there wasn't any danger, for she turned the corner and went up the street.

"Now then comes the tug-of-war!" the detective exclaimed, communing with himself.

"I must shadow her up that street, and yet keep her from seeing that I am on her track, and the only feasible way to work the trick is to come the same game which has done so well in this case.

"I will get on the opposite side of the way and as the street is a dark one I do not doubt I will be able to avoid her notice. But has the Dandy Charmer a lair then in this immediate neighborhood? It would surely seem as if such must be the case."

By this time the detective had reached the street up which the woman turned.

Judge of his disappointment and disgust when he saw her disappear in a buggy which stood by the curbstone about fifty feet from the corner.

And no sooner was she in than away went the carriage at a rapid pace, evidently the horse was a trotter of uncommon speed.

Never in all his experience, since he had turned bloodhound, and gone to hunting his fellow mortals, had the detective been more completely baffled.

He stood like a statue upon the corner and watched the carriage until it disappeared in the distance.

Then he shook his head slowly for a moment, and went down toward the Bowery. Under the circumstances further pursuit was useless.

Not unless the detective had been provided with a horse equally as good could he have hoped to keep in sight of the fugitive, and then if he had been so furnished an open pursuit would not have been productive of any good results, for at present it was his game to work in the dark, and not to allow the parties to know that he was on their track.

"Pride goeth before a fall," Joe Phenix muttered. "That is a good old saying, full of merit—good, sound, solid sense, every word of it."

"Here I was pluming myself upon the skill with which I was shadowing the woman, chuckling like a greenhorn upon my success, and then, lo and behold! in the twinkling of an eye the woman comes a trick upon me which I did not anticipate in the least, and which throws me as completely off the track as though I had never been on the scent at all."

And despite the annoyance which the detective felt, he could not refrain from laughing in a grim way when he reflected how neatly the trick had been performed.

He had all the artist's respect for a skillful operation, even though the trick was worked at his expense.

"And I was just beginning to gull myself with the belief that this Dandy Charmer had a retreat in this neighborhood," the detective continued.

"Ah! what a mistake it was! I shall have to look a good deal further afield, I fancy, before I run that gentleman to cover, but I will do it though, in the long run, clever as he undoubtedly is!"

"I won the first trick when I induced him to attack me; the second, too, fell to me when I captured his tool and wrung the truth out of him, and though I have suffered a check to-night, it is not a bad one."

"The crook will be likely to open communications with Gypsy Jack, and that will give me another chance at him, which I will not fail to improve!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

A GRATEFUL WOMAN.

As Joe Phenix was satisfied that there wasn't any further information to be gained that night, he proceeded to his home.

He did not enter his house by the front door, for if the rascals whom he was trying to trap had any suspicion that his illness was a sham, and a watch had been placed upon the house, the sight of such an ill-looking customer as he was in his disguise, would be sure to excite remark.

Then, too, as in the practice of his profession it was necessary for him to assume all sorts of strange disguises, it would never do to allow his neighbors to see him leave the house so transmogrified.

By a simple and ingenious scheme the detective was able to avoid all remark.

His dwelling was only two doors from the corner. On the side street was a tenement house, the side wall of which came up against the rear of the detective's house.

By hiring the first flat of the tenement, Joe Phenix had been able to construct a secret door through the wall, thus gaining access to his own house without being obliged to enter his street at all.

The tenement-house being a low-grade one, was occupied by all sorts of strange people, and so the detective, when he came and went in his disguises, did not attract attention nor cause remark.

As Joe Phenix came along by his house, he was on the watch to detect if there were any spies in the neighborhood, but not a soul was in sight, either suspicious-looking or otherwise.

He passed around the corner, entered the ten-

ement-house, and then passed through the secret door into his own dwelling.

After removing his disguise, he went down to the sitting-room, where he found Tony Western busy with a book.

In answer to the detective's inquiry, the assistant reported that a number of people had called to ask how he was getting on, and the most of them expressed a desire to see him—these being chiefly people who thought they amounted to something, but Western had put them off with the excuse that the doctor had declared that his patient must not be disturbed.

Just as the assistant finished the recital the bell rung and Western hastened to see who it was.

In a few moments he returned and reported that it was a Miss Lawrence, who said she was an acquaintance of Mr. Phenix and having just heard that he had been hurt called to inquire how he was.

The name of the lady suggested an idea to the detective and it was one which he determined to improve immediately.

"She is a very nice girl, and I think that as she has taken the trouble to come at this hour on purpose to inquire how I am, I will have to see her," the detective remarked.

"I'll just put the bandages around my head and lay off in the easy-chair," he continued. "Now you can show her in," Joe Phenix said when all his preparations were complete.

In a few moments Mignon Lawrence was ushered into the room by Tony Western and then he discreetly retired.

Joe Phenix was a secretive man by nature and since he had gone into the man-hunting line he had become more and more so, and not even to his trusted assistant had he revealed the fact that the burlesque actress was one of his secret agents.

"You must really excuse me for calling at such an untimely hour, Mr. Phenix!" the lady exclaimed after the door closed behind Tony Western. "But I never knew a thing about your being hurt until ten o'clock, then I happened to pick up a newspaper and read the account, so I told Miss Englebert that although the hour was late I was going to call and see how you was."

"I explained to her that you did me a great service once, and though it is the fashion to say that women are not grateful, yet as far as my experience goes they have just as much gratitude as men, and, speaking for myself, I will say that I am sure I am a very grateful creature indeed, and I am certain that no matter how long I may live I shall never forget your kindness."

"I am very much obliged to you for taking this trouble, I assure you," the detective replied.

"Take a rocking-chair and make yourself comfortable," he added.

She complied with the request and then she surveyed him in an inquisitive way with her clear gray eyes, so bright and piercing.

"Well, although you have your head all bandaged up like an Egyptian mummy, yet, I must say that you don't look as if you were going to die right away, as the newspaper reports said," she remarked in her brisk, abrupt way.

"In fact I got so worked up about the matter that I told Miss Englebert that I could not rest until I had seen you. I did not want you to die until I had the chance to say good-by to you."

"Really, I think you overestimate the slight service that I was able to do you," the detective remarked.

"Do you call it a slight service?" the young actress exclaimed.

"Well, I do not think that it would be strictly correct to characterize it by any stronger term."

"That depends of course upon how one looks at the matter," the lady remarked, thoughtfully. "I don't suppose that you consider that you did do a great deal, but from my standpoint the service seems to be a great one."

"You must take into consideration how I was situated," she continued. "I was plunged into the depths of utter despair because a miserable wretch whom I had been fool enough to marry, chose to take it into his worthless head to desert me."

"Instead of saying to myself, Good riddance to bad rubbish! and being glad that I was free from a scamp to whom I never ought to have bound myself, I went in to play the tragic queen."

"I was deserted, and worse still, to add insult to injury as it were, my wretch of a husband had publicly proclaimed that he was going to get a divorce from me in order to marry a woman whom I had always believed to be a sincere friend."

"Now what had I, as a sensible woman, ought to have done under the circumstances? Like ancient Dogberry let him go and thanked heaven that I was well rid of a knave!"

"I think that would have been the proper course under the circumstances."

"No doubt about it! But I was idiot enough to think that I ought to kill myself because a man was fickle, and a woman was false, so I was on my way to an opium den with the in-

tention of 'hitting the pipe' until I put an end to the vital spark."

"Yes, I remember the circumstance."

"I met you, and, in a burst of confidence—we humans must confide our troubles to somebody—told you what had happened."

"You persuaded me not to go—showed me that life still was worth living, and enlisted my services under your banner."

"Perhaps you did not do much, but the consequences to me were great, and I assure you that I am very grateful; and that is the reason why I come at this untimely hour to see for myself just how you were."

"Well, I am glad you have come, for your presence has suggested an idea to me, which I think will be apt to prove valuable," the detective remarked.

"I am glad of that!" the young actress exclaimed. "But, I say, how comes it that the newspaper account make you out to be so badly hurt? As far as I can see you are all right. The bandages make you look a little queer, but otherwise you do not appear at all like a sick man."

The detective laughed.

"Your eyes are certainly sharp ones, Miss Lawrence," he remarked. "But you are right in your supposition that there isn't anything the matter with me. I do not hesitate to confide the secret to you, for I have perfect confidence in your discretion, although you are the only one outside of my assistant, Tony Western, who is aware of the fact."

"Oh, you can trust me to keep the secret even if I am a woman!" the young actress declared.

"I put on the bandages before you were admitted, for I am so cautious that I thought it would be best not to even allow my assistant to know I was going to confide the secret to your keeping," the detective explained.

"You can be sure that I will not prove myself to be unworthy of your confidence!" Miss Lawrence declared.

"I am engaged in a very difficult game and one that I am going to have considerable trouble to win, I think," Joe Phenix remarked. And then he related all the particulars to the young actress.

She meditated over the matter for a few moments and then said.

"I think you are right in your conclusion, and there is no doubt that you are correct in thinking you will have a hard fight to win. I wish you would give me a chance to take a hand in the game!"

"That is just what I am thinking about doing," the detective replied.

"I am satisfied that the Englishman who calls himself George Rochester and this pretended widow are the parties who are working the scheme, the rest are but dupes of these plotters and innocent of any wrong-doing."

"Yes, that is the way it looks to me."

"Now then it is a question whether this man and woman are acquainted with you or not," Joe Phenix remarked.

"My impression is that the chances are great that they are," he continued. "For the probabilities are strong that the conspirators have thoroughly posted themselves in regard to all the inmates of the Englebert mansion, for they would consider that such knowledge would be useful to them."

"I can easily assume a disguise," Miss Lawrence declared. "My profession as an actress has made me familiar with devices of that kind, and you can trust me to get myself up so that I doubt if even an argus-eyed man like yourself would not be deceived."

"That is the idea I had, and then after you assume your disguise you must take a room in the house and do your best to gain the confidence of this widow."

"I am aware that this role of spy which I am proposing to you is not one of the most attractive in the world," the detective continued. "Still it is a business which must be followed by some one or else the rogues would get the upper hand of honest people nine times out of ten."

"Oh, I do not object to playing such a part!" the young actress decided. "There is a spice of excitement and danger about it which just suits me."

"Now my present position is very pleasant indeed. Rosalind treats me more like a sister than aught else, for she has taken a sincere liking to me, as I have to her. She tries to gratify my every wish, but I will admit that the tameness of the life palls upon me sometimes and I catch myself wishing for the old excitement of the stage existence."

"That is only natural, I can understand it," Joe Phenix observed.

"Once a Bohemian always a Bohemian I suppose."

"Yes, that is the truth, I presume. I know how it is myself. I am well able to retire, but I know I would never be contented in idleness. Life would be very dull indeed to me if I could not keep myself busy about something."

"I will gladly undertake the task, and I know the change will be an agreeable one, although I shall hate to leave Rosalind, for I have grown

as much attached to her as though she was my own sister."

"You can console yourself with the thought that it is her battle that you are fighting," the detective observed.

"Yes, that is true, and you can depend upon my doing all in my power to make a successful spy."

"I haven't any doubt that you will work the trick to perfection!" the detective declared. "Now the game will be to gain the confidence of the woman, and as she has been an actress like yourself, that fact ought to aid you."

"It certainly should do so!"

"She is deep and shrewd—one of the kind who pretends to be innocent and helpless, yet in reality is fully able to take care of herself. It will not be an easy matter to gain her confidence, but the attempt must be made."

"I will make the trial, and if I don't succeed it will not be for want of hard work."

My idea is that you will stand more chance of success if you manage to convey to her the idea that you have been the companion of crooks and have dabbled a little in crooked work yourself."

"I think that notion is a good one," the young actress observed, thoughtfully.

"I will leave to you the getting up of the scheme; you can think the matter over and work out a game for yourself."

"That is all right! You can trust me to arrange a scheme which will deceive this woman unless she is keener than I take her to be."

"She is an extra smart schemer and you will have to do your best to deceive her," the detective warned.

"I trust I will be equal to the task!" the young actress exclaimed, confidently.

Then Joe Phenix suggested a means of communication and this ended the interview.

"It will be diamond cut diamond!" the detective exclaimed after the young actress departed.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WARE HAWK.

WE will now return to the woman in the buggy and take up her movements from the time when she so successfully rid herself of the watch which the disguised detective had placed upon her.

Joe Phenix had conjectured that there was a man in waiting in the buggy, and he was correct in this supposition.

And that man was the Englishman, George Rochester, plainly attired in a dark coat and a soft hat pulled down over his eyes.

No word passed between the two after the woman got into the carriage until they were fully a mile away from the corner where the buggy had waited.

The driver adopted a roundabout way, as though he was afraid of being followed.

At the first corner he turned into the cross-street and headed for the Bowery, then after going a block turned to the north, drove two blocks, and started toward the Bowery again.

He kept on this time until the great thoroughfare was reached.

Up the Bowery the buggy went at a good rate until Eighth street was reached, then the driver turned abruptly to the left and drove through Eighth street until he came to Fifth avenue, proceeded up Fifth avenue to Thirteenth street and down Thirteenth street toward the river.

It is not a light street and at this hour was almost deserted.

Two blocks down he drove and then slackened the pace of the horse.

Then he peered out of the side of the carriage and looked behind him.

"I thought I would be able to do the trick without any difficulty!" he exclaimed in a tone of satisfaction.

"No carriage is in sight, so it is evident that we have not been followed, for no footman would be able to keep up with us at the rate at which I drove."

"I could have told you right in the beginning that I did not think there was any danger," the woman remarked. And as she spoke she allowed the shawl to fall a little from her face, revealing the features of Mrs. Englebert.

"I was careful to look behind me after I came out of the saloon," she explained. "And if there had been anybody playing the spy upon me I would have been sure to have discovered them."

"You must not be too certain of that," the Englishman replied.

"Some of these New York shadows are wonderfully clever and you might be followed without your being aware of the fact."

"Yes, I know that it is possible, but I do not believe I was shadowed to-night though, all the same!" Mrs. Englebert replied, confidently.

"I comprehend that you are much smarter than the average of women, and, in fact, I don't think I ever met one that was shrewder or more able than yourself, but you must not fall into the error of believing that you can beat men of experience at their own game."

"No, I will not make any mistake of that kind," the woman replied. "But I took care to

look behind me, and if I was followed I most assuredly would have seen the man."

"Yes, if he was not shrewd enough to anticipate that you would do something of the kind and so keep out of the range of your eyes," the Englishman rejoined.

"He might have been on the other side of the street, you know," he added.

"Yes, but I do not believe he was!"

"Well, it doesn't matter," the man observed. "I have worked the trick in such a way that the smartest shadow that ever trailed a crook would be thrown out."

"Did you get anything?"

"Yes, this letter," and the woman gave the missive to her companion.

"It was on the shelf behind the bar, near the end and within easy reach."

"I could read the inscription without any trouble from where I stood, and so when the bartender went for the change—I gave him a bill on purpose—I helped myself to the letter without saying anything to anybody."

Rochester nodded his head in token of satisfaction.

"That was a sharp trick," he remarked.

"Well, I thought that it was the best way to get the letter," the woman observed. "If you remember you cautioned me to be careful, and warned me to be on the lookout to see that no one played the spy upon me when I asked for the letter."

"Yes, I remember. You see, I believe in always playing as safe a game as possible, and although in this case everything seems to be all right yet I went ahead on my old principle of assuming that it was not, and so took all possible precautions against falling into a trap."

"Ah, yes, I suppose the idea is a good one, although in this case there does not seem to be any doubt that your scheme worked all right," the woman remarked. "The detective is certainly very badly injured. In fact the newspaper account said that it was doubtful if he would recover from his injuries."

"Yes, I know that, and it certainly looks as if Bridle Bill had done a good piece of work," the Englishman remarked, thoughtfully.

"Still, this detective is such a sly fox that if the attack had not succeeded he would be quite capable of pretending to be badly hurt so that he might throw the man who put up the job off his guard and thus give him a chance to capture him."

"Yes, it is possible, of course, that the detective is playing 'possum,' as these Americans say, but it does not appear to me as if it was very probable," Mrs. Englebert said, slowly and doubtfully.

"Well, I agree with you that the affair looks as if everything was all right, but a few extra precautions never do any harm," Rochester declared with the air of a philosopher.

"There is one point about the thing that I do not like," he continued. "It is a small matter, I know, but sometimes small matters involve great consequences."

"The moment I read in the newspaper this morning of the attack on Phenix and saw from the account the job had been so well done that the detective was not able to give a good description of the man who assaulted him, for most certainly from the description of the assailant as given in the newspapers I should never have recognized Bridle Bill, I came to the conclusion that he would be after his money as soon as possible."

"Yes, it seems to me that that was a natural supposition."

"All men of his class are eager to clutch their pay, and as the description was so faulty he need not have been afraid that he would be identified as the assailant, so, acting on this idea I kept watch of the saloon."

"I was too 'leery,' you know, to go into the place, for if everything had not gone all right I might have found myself in a trap," and the Englishman laughed as he recalled this instance of caution.

"It will take a smart man to catch you!" Mrs. Englebert declared in accents of admiration.

"Yes, I flatter myself that I was not born yesterday!" Rochester remarked in a self-satisfied way. "And although there is no doubt that this Joe Phenix is an extra good man, yet I flatter myself that he will find on this occasion that he is not good enough to catch me in a trap."

"I know the man well, he did succeed in trapping me once, just because I was foolhardy and reckless, but I have learned wisdom since that time."

"Oh, I did not know that!" the woman exclaimed, in astonishment. "When you spoke about him the other day you did not say that you had ever met him."

"I did not happen to speak of it, that was all," the Englishman replied, carelessly. "But I know the fellow thoroughly, although I doubt very much if he would know me, for I do not look now much like the man whom he succeeded in robbing."

"I owe the fellow one for that trick, and though I had the thing so arranged that he was not able to hold me, yet it was not through any

willingness on his part that I got off. I have a long memory for that sort of thing, and you can depend upon it that if I ever get a chance to get even with this hound of a detective I will do it!"

"Oh, yes, I know you well enough to be sure of that!" the woman declared.

"Well, as I said, I did not go into the saloon, but took up a position on the outside, where I had a good view of the door, so that no one could get into the place or out of it without my seeing them."

"I had told Bridle Bill to write, you know, and I fancied he would be on hand with his letter during the forenoon, but he did not put in an appearance, and that fact excited my suspicions."

"He evidently came some time, for the letter shows that," Mrs. Englebert remarked. "Perhaps he was afraid to come during the day and waited for the night, so that the darkness would cover his movements."

"Yes, that may be the explanation, but, somehow, I am a little suspicious about the matter, and I cannot give any better reason for it than being disappointed in not seeing Bridle Bill. But let's see what the letter says."

The Englishman brought the buggy to a halt by the side of a lamp-post, so he would have light, and opened the letter, which he read aloud, and when he came to the end, he shook his head as though he was displeased.

"The man is evidently alarmed by the row that the newspapers have made about the matter," Mrs. Englebert remarked. "And so he was afraid to come himself."

"Yes, that appears to be the idea, and it may be all right; then again it may not be, but you would be safe in betting an extremely large sum that I am not going to take any chances about the matter."

And then the Englishman tore the letter into minute fragments and threw them away, starting the horse into a trot as he did so.

"Bridle Bill may like to do business through a third party, but I do not, and I don't intend to have anything to do with this Gypsy Jack."

"Do you think that a trap has been set for you?" Mrs. Englebert asked.

"Well, I don't know what to think about the matter," the Englishman replied, slowly, his brow clouded by the lines of thought.

"I don't like the looks of the matter, and, trap or no trap, I am not going to let this Gypsy Jack get a chance at me."

"What do you intend to do?"

"Write and say I will not do business through a third party, and that Bridle Bill must make some arrangement so I will be able to see him personally."

"Yes, but if there is anything wrong about the matter—if Bridle Bill is acting for the detective, for unless he is there cannot be a trap—will he not arrange a meeting so that you will be snared?" the woman questioned.

"If the fellow has sold me out, that will be the game, of course, but as I am on my guard, I fancy that it will not be an easy matter, even for so expert a bloodhound as this Joe Phenix, to arrange a trap so cunningly that I will not be able to detect the same."

"But suppose everything is all right and that Bridle Bill becomes angry because you will not do business through this Gypsy Jack, may he not 'peach' on you?" the woman inquired.

"To do that would only be to get himself into trouble," Rochester rejoined.

"Of course he might make terms with Phenix by explaining that he was only a hired tool, and giving me as the principal, but then his information in regard to myself is so meager that he would not be able to reveal enough about me to give the detective any clew," the other continued, in a thoughtful way.

"No one in this country knows me as the Dandy Charmer excepting some English crooks like this Bridle Bill, and it will be a hard matter to get at me, for you can depend upon it that I will not allow any one to catch sight of me in the Dandy Charmer's rig for many a long day. The English crook who is known by that peculiar appellation will disappear as completely as though he had never existed."

"I don't see how it will be possible for any one to get at you," Mrs. Englebert declared, after thinking the matter over for a moment.

"If I am careful not to make any false moves it cannot be done!" Rochester declared, decidedly.

By this time the carriage was passing through a block which was unusually dark, and Rochester halted the horse.

"This will be a good place for you to make your change," he said, "for there is not a soul in sight."

They were in the neighborhood of the river, and dwellings had given place to factories and workshops, now dark and deserted.

The woman stripped off the calico gown, which was made large so as to go over her ordinary street dress, which she had on underneath, then the shawl and gown were rolled up in a neat parcel and she put on her hat which was in the carriage.

"We forgot all about the beer, which we

ought to have drank," the Englishman declared in a joking way.

Then he tasted it.

"Bah! it is stale now and worthless. I will leave it here for some tramp to capture as a prize!"

So he placed the pail on the sidewalk and then drove to within a block of the lodging-house where Mrs. Englebert got out and started for Miss Jones's abode, while the Englishman returned the carriage to the stable from which he had procured it.

Rochester's thoughts were of a pleasant nature as he took his homeward road.

"I think I have managed this affair as well as it could be done by any one," he murmured, complacently, as he strode along.

"Everything is progressing in the most satisfactory manner, and as the first affair is going on so well I think it is about time that I began on the second, and the success of that depends upon whether Maurice Englebert is a rascal or an honest man."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN ASTONISHING DISCLOSURE.

As the reader has probably seen, the son of the dead money-king was not a radically vicious fellow, he was only weak and irresolute, and when he fell under the dominion of a stronger mind could be tempted to do things which, if he had been left to himself, he would not have thought of.

The mysterious death of his father was a great blow to him, and the young man had been seriously sobered by the loss, and in the settlement of the estate had allowed the old lawyers, who had been his father's legal advisers for years, to arrange matters.

Then too he had taken a great liking to Doctor Mairstone and listened to his advice. So the young man had led such a blameless life since the death of his father that no one could possibly have found any fault with his conduct.

It was the night which succeeded the one on which occurred the events detailed in our last chapter.

Maurice Englebert sat in his library enjoying a cigar and glancing over the pages of an evening newspaper.

The clock showed that it was a little past eight.

The young man was practically alone, for Rosalind had gone to the opera and pressed Doctor Mairstone into service as an escort.

Maurice had declined going on the score that he did not like Germans, and could not see any beauties in Wagner's music.

But now that he had had an after-dinner nap, and about got to the end of his cigar he began to feel bored.

"There's nothing in the paper, anyway!" he declared, as he tossed the journal upon the table. "And as for that novel which Mairstone recommended so highly, I think that it is as dull as dishwater! It is too deep for me, and I should be bored to death if I attempted to wade through it."

"I suppose I may as well take a look in at the clubs and then see who is at the opera."

Just as he came to this determination a servant entered with a card.

"A gentleman at the door, sir, requested me to give you this," was the announcement.

Maurice took the card.

Upon it in a firm, legible "back-hand" was penciled these words:

"A stranger desires to see Mr. M. Englebert upon important business, and trusts that he may be accorded the favor of a personal interview."

"What sort of a gentleman is it?" the young man asked.

Like all men of wealth in a city like New York, Englebert was obliged to be particular in regard to whom he admitted to his presence, for cranks, with visionary schemes, and genteel swindlers, with novel devices for extorting money, and mendicants, anxious for charity, all sought to get a chance at him.

"A well-dressed, middle-aged gentleman, looks like a doctor or a lawyer, sir!" the man answered.

"Anything suspicious about him?"

"Oh, no, sir, quite the contrary—quite respectable—quite the gent, sir."

"Well, you can show him up and I will see what he wants."

The servant withdrew and in a few moments ushered into the apartment an elderly gentleman, neatly dressed in a dark suit, and with his iron-gray hair, short and bushy side-whiskers, he looked, as the man said, "quite the gent."

"Mr. Maurice Englebert, I presume?" the stranger remarked with a courtly bow.

"Yes, sir, take a chair."

The stranger accepted the invitation.

"My name is Brown," he said, "Amos W. Brown, and I am a promoter by profession. I presume you understand what that is."

"Oh, yes, it is your occupation to get men of means interested in various schemes, but really, Mr. Brown, I shall be obliged to tell you that I never take any part in business of that kind," Englebert remarked. "My lawyers, Archibald,

Douglass and Douglass, attend to all my investments and if you have anything to propose you will have to see them."

"Ah, yes, I understand. It is quite customary, of course, for men of large wealth like yourself to delegate such matters to their legal advisers, for it saves a deal of trouble," and the stranger, who was evidently a believer in flattery rubbed his hands softly together and beamed in a mild way on the young man.

"Yes, I have found it to be so."

"Well, I have come to speak with you on a business matter, and it is one which I believe to be of the highest importance to you, but it is of such a nature that I think it would be better for you to attend to it in person rather than turn the matter over to your lawyers."

Englebert looked surprised at this statement, and yet there was something in the man's manner which made him think the affair was something out of the common run.

"Your statement is a rather remarkable one and I am at a loss to understand why my lawyers cannot handle the matter," Maurice observed.

"A very few words will explain," the stranger declared, with another polite bow. And then he glanced around him in a peculiar way, as if in search of something, lowered his voice to a cautious tone, and said:

"I presume I may speak freely—there is no danger of my communication being overheard?"

"Not the slightest danger, sir. No one will play the spy upon us," Maurice declared.

"The matter is of the highest importance, I assure you, and the mischief would be to pay if the truth leaked out," Mr. Brown asserted.

By this time young Englebert had come to the conclusion that his visitor was doing a little bit of acting in order that extra attention should be paid to his communication.

"You need not be alarmed about the matter; you can speak with perfect freedom; no one will hear what you may say except myself," Englebert declared.

"When I explain the matter you will see that I have good cause for taking extra precautions to keep the affair quiet," the stranger asserted.

Englebert contented himself with bowing consent, he was getting rather tired of so much preliminary talk.

"You will understand how important the subject is when I say that it concerns your father's will," the stranger observed in a tone only a little above a whisper.

This announcement took Maurice completely by surprise and he stared at the stranger in amazement.

"You comprehend what I said, I hope," Mr. Brown continued in the same cautious tones. "Your father's will—you understand."

"Well, yes, I certainly understand what you say—"

"What I said, I mean!" Mr. Brown declared in a positive way. "I came to see you about your father's will."

"Yes, but my father did not leave any will!" the young man declared.

"Oh, I understand all about that," the stranger remarked with his beaming smile.

"All the particulars of the case are known to me," he continued. "When I engage in any business enterprise I always make it a rule to acquaint myself with all the particulars that can possibly be learned before I go into the matter."

"You think your father left no will because no such paper was found after his death, but the party that I represent in this matter—you understand, Mr. Englebert, that I am acting for a client, exactly the same as though I was a lawyer. Well, this party says that before your father's death he *did* make a will, and that you were aware of the fact that such a document existed."

A dark look came over the face of young Englebert.

The words recalled to his memory an act of folly in his life, which he gladly would have forgotten if he could. An instance where he had been led away by the specious arguments of a wily villain.

He had made a false step, but had been rescued from the consequences of his act by the timely interposition of the veteran detective, Joe Phenix, and the generosity of his father, who had condoned the offense.

For the sake of shielding his son the father had allowed the wily scoundrel, who had contrived the plot, to go unwhipped of justice because it would not have been possible to punish him without exposing the son's connection with the matter, and this the father shrunk from doing.

The words of the smooth-spoken stranger recalled the affair so vividly to the memory of Maurice Englebert that it seemed that it was but yesterday it happened.

Since the night when the detective had so cunningly sprung the snare which had caught the plotters in its meshes, the young man had neither seen nor heard of his companion in guilt, the wily, specious Englishman who had tempted him into the path of crime.

After his father's death, when he had come into the property, Maurice had expected that the man might make his appearance and endeavor

to extort some money from him on account of the old affair, but in this anticipation he had been disappointed.

The young man had made up his mind though that he would not be forced into giving any money and resolved to show fight if any such game was attempted.

And now that this disclosure was so unexpected it made Maurice at once jump to the conclusion that the Englishman was at the bottom of it, and being rash and impulsive he exclaimed:

"I think I can guess who is at the back of this affair!"

Mr. Brown assumed an expression of astonishment.

"Is that so?" he asked, apparently very much interested.

"Well, that will undoubtedly help matters forward a little if you know the party," he continued. "For you will understand just how much credence can be given to his statements."

"Of course the gentleman is an utter stranger to me. I never saw him until he made my acquaintance and enlisted my services in this affair."

"His name is Lysander Somerdyke?"

Mr. Brown assumed a wise expression and then he shook his head, slowly.

"That is not the name he gave me, but as this affair is one of those which must be conducted 'under the rose,' as the expression is—a little off-color, you understand, it is very likely that he did not reveal his right name to me," the other explained.

"He said his name was Smith—John Smith. Of course there are a great many Smiths in the world, and a large number of the Smiths are also called John, but because a stranger declares that his name is a common one like John Smith, it is no reason why he should not be believed," the smooth-spoken Mr. Brown argued in his oily way.

"I presume not," the young man observed, showing by his manner that he was annoyed. "But there is not much doubt in my mind though that your John Smith and my Lysander Somerdyke are one and the same."

"Very possible, of course, but as far as I am concerned I have no means of telling anything about the matter."

"I do not think there is any doubt about it," young Englebert asserted.

"Well, after all, it is a small matter and does not amount to much," the other remarked.

"The man is a first-class rascal!" Maurice declared.

"I should not be surprised if you were quite correct in that statement," and Mr. Brown rubbed his hands together, softly, and smiled as though he considered the remark to be something of a joke.

"But you understand that in this matter you will not come in contact with this Mr. Smith at all," the promoter hastened to explain.

"He told me right at the beginning of the affair that he did not wish to see you, and I must arrange the matter so as to transact the business in person."

"Oh, it is this rascal, Somerdyke, sure enough!" young Englebert declared. "He knows very well that I would not have anything to do with him, and that is why he skulks under an assumed name."

"And then the business too is a little off-color, as I said before," Mr. Brown remarked with the air of a man who was making a candid confession.

"I wonder then that a man like yourself should become involved in such a matter," Maurice remarked, coldly.

The promoter assumed a pathetic air and sighed deeply.

"Ah, my dear Mr. Englebert, it is not always possible in this uncertain world for a man to do just exactly as he would like."

"When this Mr. Smith explained this matter to me I said at first that I could not handle it. It was out of my line, and then there was a little crookedness attached to it that I did not like; but I will frankly admit that my objections were overcome by the gentleman representing to me that if I succeeded in carrying the negotiations to a successful end I would be able to make a good bit of money out of the matter, and I will have to confess that at present I am very much in need of funds for I have not been able to strike any very lucrative enterprises lately."

"I think your principal is mistaken in his calculations," young Englebert observed, coldly. "I do not think that anybody will make any money out of this affair—that is, if it is expected that the money will come from me."

"Well, as far as that goes, of course, I cannot say. I took the commission because this Mr. Smith seemed to be so sanguine that there was money in it, and as he was acquainted with all the facts, I thought he ought to know what he was about."

"You will find that there isn't any money in it if it depends upon me!" Maurice declared, firmly.

"Permit me to explain the matter and possibly you may see reason to alter your determination."

"Very well, but I think you are wasting

your time!" young Englebert declared, a trifle impatiently.

"Oh, I can afford it!" the other exclaimed in a cheerful way. "A man cannot expect to make money without an effort, you know."

"And now to come down to solid business."

"This Mr. John Smith asserts that when your father died he left a will, and in that will, after bestowing a small yearly income upon your sister and yourself, he tied the rest of his property up as long as the law would allow him to do."

"Mr. John Smith also said that the existence of this will was known to you before your father's death, and that you had had the document in your hands and were acquainted with the contents."

"Your Mr. John Smith is Lysander Somerdyke, sure enough, for to no other man living are these facts known!" Maurice exclaimed.

"Well, as I know nothing whatever about the matter I am not competent to form an opinion," the promoter remarked.

"Such a will did exist; I am aware of that fact."

"And if it had been produced after your father's death it would have made a vast difference to you," Mr. Brown suggested, with the air of a man who was making a profound study of the matter.

"Yes, that is true enough."

"But as no will was found I presume that you came to the natural conclusion that it had been destroyed."

"I certainly did."

"Well, this party asserts that the will was not destroyed by your father, but was in existence at the time of his death—is in existence now, and can be produced at any moment."

Young Englebert was taken completely by surprise by this announcement, for he had not calculated upon any such being made.

He was not a bright fellow, and even after the will was mentioned had not been able to guess what the game was.

"This statement seems to be absurd!" he declared.

"That is exactly what I said to the party, and he replied that no matter whether it appeared to be absurd or not it was the truth."

"How can it be possible that such an important paper could come into a stranger's hands?"

"Exactly! that question came up in my mind too, and I did not hesitate to ask it!" Mr. Brown declared.

"And would you believe it? the man actually laughed in my face!"

"Oh, come!" he exclaimed, "that is a point which does not concern you in the least and you must not trouble your head about it."

"Ah, yes, but this document could only have come into this man's possession in one way—by theft, and the law will have something to say in regard to that kind of business!" young Englebert declared.

"That is what I suggested, and he replied that he did not see how the law was going to get hold of the matter."

"He described the situation thus:

"By his father's death Maurice Englebert came in for a clear half of his father's property, amounting in round figures to ten or twelve million dollars. He inherited this amount because there was no will, and therefore he and his sister were the only heirs."

"If this will is brought to light this princely fortune will be taken away from him and he will be compelled to content himself with an income, which will not appear to him to be more than a beggar's pittance, now that he has had full control of a clear half of his father's vast fortune. I will admit, Mr. Englebert, that this statement did not appear to me to be overdrawn."

Maurice merely nodded, his face gloomy with the lines of care.

"I do not see then why I should hesitate to reveal to Maurice Englebert that this will exists," he continued. "If he chooses to kick up a row about the matter, and to denounce me to the world, why then I might get into trouble, if I was caught, for, undoubtedly, I would be accused of stealing the document; but it would be a foolish thing for him to do, for by the act he would forfeit the millions that have come to him, and if Maurice Englebert is as wise as I take him to be he will not throw away a fortune just to satisfy a mere whim! And I must say, Mr. Englebert, this statement seems to be a pretty strong one."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DEMAND.

MAURICE ENGLEBERT pondered over the matter for a good five minutes before he made a reply.

The situation was such an extremely unexpected one that he was like a man dazed by a heavy blow for a few moments.

And when he came to reflect upon the matter he comprehended that Somerdyke had planned the scheme with wonderful cleverness; there was no doubt in his mind that the wily Englishman was the man in the background masquerading under the name of John Smith.

As he had not seen or heard of Somerdyke since the night when Joe Phenix surprised himself and the Englishman in his father's office, in the very act of robbing the safe of a large amount of money, with which they designed to fly to Canada, he had come to the conclusion that Somerdyke had returned to England, thinking that the millionaire would endeavor to have him punished in some underhand way for misleading his son.

But now he came to the opinion that the wily Englishman had merely hidden himself from sight and bided his time until a favorable opportunity came to him to make a strike.

Maurice knew that in the day when Somerdyke acted as his father's confidential secretary, and lived in the Englebert mansion, that he had some of the servants in his pay, for Joe Phenix had discovered this fact and after the exposure came, the erring men had been discharged.

But now the suspicion came to Maurice that one of Somerdyke's confederates had escaped discovery and so had not been expelled. This confederate had aided the Englishman to steal the will, for Somerdyke knew all about the document and could easily get at it.

Young Englebert's brain was in a whirl, and he was so bewildered that he knew not what action to take.

One thing was certain though. He could not make any movement to denounce the Englishman unless he was willing to make public the fact of the existence of the will, and that would cost him his fortune.

The stranger watched the countenance of the young man with the eyes of a hawk, and as he noted his indecision a gleam of triumph shone in his metallic-looking eyes.

"As I remarked, in substance, it seemed to me that the position this Mr. Smith occupies is an extremely strong one," he observed.

"You cannot call him to an account for being in possession of this document without making the fact public that it exists, and the moment that is known then away goes your millions, and you will be reduced to an income hardly more than enough to pay your wine and cigar bills."

The face of young Englebert was dark indeed as he listened to the words of the other.

It was truly a most unpleasant prospect that was brought to his view.

Now he was one of wealthiest young men in New York, a popular fellow in all the leading clubs, his society courted, his views sought, a welcome guest almost everywhere, and though Maurice was not very bright yet he was intelligent enough to comprehend that this pleasant state of affairs was due more to the fact that he was worth a deal of money than to aught else.

And to be reduced to a beggarly income of five thousand dollars a year, why it would put him on a par with a lot of nobodies for whose opinions and society none cared.

There was no disguising the fact that to give up the money would be an extremely disagreeable thing to do, and the more that young Englebert reflected upon the situation, the more awkward and ugly it appeared.

"It is not a pleasant prospect to contemplate," Maurice remarked, after a long pause.

"Indeed I should say that it was not!" Mr. Brown exclaimed. "And if you will pardon me for a suggestion, I should say that if I were you I would do all in my power to keep the matter quiet."

"Yes, but is that exactly the honest thing to do?" Maurice queried, evidently troubled by some qualms of conscience.

"Well, I should say so—decidedly so!" the promoter responded, briskly. "You are acting perfectly correct in this matter. The only crooked work is on the part of my client, who has managed to get hold of this important paper, which he has no business with."

"Yes, he has evidently stolen it, for otherwise it could not have come into his possession."

"That sin, of course, is on his conscience and not on yours," and Mr. Brown chuckled in a pleasant way, as though he did not consider that it amounted to much, anyway.

"Well, I suppose this party has some proposition to make to me in regard to the will," Maurice said, slowly.

"Of course! the document is not of the slightest use to him," Mr. Brown explained.

"Why did he steal it, then?"

"So that he would be able to make money out of it," the other replied. "It is a crooked piece of work, of course, no doubt about that; but, as I said before, the sin of that lies at his door. His idea was simple enough. The will only concerned two people, your sister and yourself. To you two the document is worth a good many millions of dollars, for if it was made public both of you would be reduced to a small income."

"Now, this party made his calculations in this way. 'If I can get hold of this paper, and wait until the estate is all settled—give the heirs plenty of time to see how good it is to be worth ten or twelve millions, and then come forward with it, the chances are that one of the two will be pretty apt to be willing to give me a good round sum of money for the document.'

"That is the way the party figured," the promoter continued. "And he thought it would be the better to treat with you than with your sister, for women have no head for business, and least of all for any business of this peculiar, ticklish kind."

"Yes, she would not understand what to do," Maurice said, in a gloomy way.

"Well, now the point is right here. Do you want to treat with this party for this document?" the promoter exclaimed in a brisk, business-like way.

"He is willing to sell it to you, and I am authorized to submit the document for your inspection, so that you can satisfy yourself that it is the genuine article. You would know it, I presume, if you had a chance to examine it?"

"Oh, yes, I could not be deceived in regard to it."

"After the purchase the paper is your property, and you can do what you like with it, and no one will be the wiser."

"But to destroy the will would be a crime!" young Englebert exclaimed, moodily.

"Oh, nonsense! My dear sir, such little games as that are worked every day by men who hold themselves up to be very paragons of honesty!" Mr. Brown declared.

"Just consider now, who do you wrong? The estate if it is taken away from your sister and yourself goes to your children's children. If you and your sister keep the money it will go to them all the same, but you two have the use of it during your lifetime, and your children will enjoy the same privilege, so it seems to me that there isn't anything particularly wrong in your destroying this paper, if you are lucky enough to get it into your possession."

"Only three people know that the will exists, my client, Smith, myself and yourself, and as far as I am concerned I don't know anything about the paper but by hearsay. Smith you will pay, he will pay me, and then what you do with the document is nobody's business."

"I want you to understand, Mr. Englebert, that there is only one payment to be made and that settles the thing, so don't get the idea in your head that you will have any trouble afterward, for even if my client and myself were not disposed to act on the square it would not be possible for us to kick up any row."

"If we should tell the story of this transaction, no one would believe it, and we would be merely laughed at for our pains."

"I say this so that you will not feel any hesitation in going ahead—so that you will feel assured that you are going to get the squarest kind of a deal."

"What sum does your principal want?" young Englebert asked, slowly, his brow dark with thought.

"Well, he thought that he ought to have a hundred thousand dollars."

"It is a large sum!" Maurice exclaimed, evidently amazed.

"It is only fifty thousand dollars apiece for you and your sister, and the destruction of the will assures you possession of over twenty-five millions," Mr. Brown argued.

"Really, when you come to consider the matter, the sum is not a great one when you look at what you gain."

"I do not think you could get my sister to agree to give anything," Maurice remarked, slowly. "She will have some old-fashioned notions in regard to the honesty of such a transaction, and if the affair came to her knowledge the chances are she would declare that if any such document was in existence it ought to be made public."

"Yes, yes, I presume it is very likely," Mr. Brown observed, with a grave shake of the head.

"As I observed a moment ago, women have very little idea of business."

"So in making any calculations about this affair my sister must be left out of the question."

"Ah, yes; well, under those circumstances, I presume the price ought to be reduced a little," the promoter remarked. "And, I must say, that I think you are wise—decidedly wise not to say a word about the matter to your sister. It would be just as well to keep her in the dark about the matter."

"Yes, I think so."

"Now, I do not believe in haggling over a matter like this when I am dealing with a gentleman like yourself!" Mr. Brown declared. "So suppose we put the figure right down to fifty thousand dollars, but you must understand, Mr. Englebert, that that is the lowest price!"

"You must give me some time to think this matter over," Maurice remarked. "It has come upon me so suddenly that I must have time to reflect."

"Certainly, of course," the promoter replied, in the most cheerful way.

"Nothing was further from my thoughts than the anticipation that you would come to any conclusion to-night."

"This is merely breaking the ice, so to speak."

"Yes, I understand. Well, suppose you give me a week to think the matter over," the young man remarked. "Fifty thousand dollars is a large sum, you know."

"Oh, yes, I am aware of the fact," and Mr. Brown rose. "In a week I will have the pleasure of calling upon you."

"Of course, Mr. Englebert, I suppose you are aware of the necessity that exists for keeping this matter quiet?"

"Yes, certainly."

"I have known men who, when concerned in a matter of this kind, have been foolish enough to call in the aid of detectives, and in all such cases you can rely upon it that a precious mess the officers made of it."

"The main point with you is to keep the existence of this will quiet. If the truth gets out, then it is both good-by to your millions and to my client's thousands."

"I understand that."

"I want to settle the thing quietly and nicely, you know; have all arranged in an agreeable manner for everybody."

"You can depend upon it that I shall not make a fool of myself!" young Englebert declared.

"It will be very wise indeed for you to act prudently. In a week, then, Mr. Englebert, I will call and I have no doubt that by that time you will come to the conclusion that it is better to give up fifty thousand dollars than to surrender twelve millions. At any rate most men would be apt to think so. If you should happen to make up your mind sooner, put a carefully worded personal in the Daily Blaster. Good-evening, sir."

Maurice touched the bell, and the servant conducted the promoter to the door; he went forth into the night, and he laughed as he descended the steps.

"I have hooked my fish beyond a doubt!" he cried.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE ACTRESS SPEAKS.

FOR a good ten minutes after Mr. Brown departed young Englebert remained in a state of gloomy abstraction.

Then at last, with an effort, he roused himself, rose to his feet and paced slowly up and down the room.

"I know that it is wrong for me to even listen to this proposition!" he exclaimed. "I thought I had more moral courage, but when I am brought to the test I weaken. I cannot bring myself to give up the money!"

"My father did not use my sister and myself right when he made such a will, and nine men out of ten would be eager to take advantage of such an opportunity as is now offered me!"

"I must go out and take a turn in the air, for my head is whirling!"

The young man made his way to the nearest club, and there he joined a gay party with whom he made the rounds of all the places of fashionable resort and drank quite heavily for him, for the young man seldom drank to excess.

This was done to still the voice of conscience.

Maurice knew the difference between right and wrong well enough to understand that if he bought and destroyed the will, he was committing a crime, although, as he said, it was one that few men would shrink from doing under the circumstances.

He arrived at home just as the party came from the opera. Doctor Mairstone had acted as escort for Rosalind and Miss Lawrence, whom the young heiress insisted upon taking everywhere with her.

As was the custom of the house when the young people went out, a hack was in waiting for them, and after it was dispatched, the girls went up-stairs, while Maurice and Dr. Mairstone adjourned to the library to enjoy a cigar.

But young Englebert was so restless that he could not smoke, and so after awhile he went up-stairs to his sister's apartment.

He had drunk just wine enough to make him feel extremely shrewd and cunning, so he had determined to sound his sister upon the will business, and ascertain her views on the matter, but without letting her know the truth about the affair.

Rosalind was in her wrapper, about to get ready to go to bed, when Maurice knocked at the door.

"It is I—Maurice," he said. "Have you gone to bed?"

"Not yet," she replied, as she admitted him to the apartment.

"Where's Mignon?" he asked, as he glanced around and noticed her absence.

"She is in her room—she was busy with my hair when you knocked, and as she was only half-dressed, she ran away."

The two girls occupied adjoining apartments, but, as a rule, the two slept in the same bed, for the young heiress had taken such a liking to the burlesque actress, that she could not bear to be separated from her.

"I have been thinking over a certain matter to-night," Maurice remarked as he helped himself to a rocking-chair, "and as I am a little puzzled about it I made up my mind to see what you think."

"Well, I will give you my honest opinion, although I cannot promise that it will be worth much," the girl said with a laugh.

"If you remember, after father's death I

looked for a will and was surprised that no such document was found?"

"Yes, I remember."

"And, if you recollect, too, I said that it was a good thing for us that the will which I expected to see did not appear?"

"Yes, I remember. You said you understood that father had made a will bequeathing a fixed income to us and tying up the estate for a long term of years."

"Exactly. I knew such a will was in existence during a short time before father's death, and I was astonished that it did not come to light."

"And yet, if you remember, father's lawyers, when you spoke of the will, declared that they had no knowledge of any such paper and doubted its existence."

"Yes, I recollect, and when I found that they were disposed to take that view of the matter, I did not attempt to argue the point; but I could have told them though that there was such a will—that it had not been drawn out by any lawyer, but was in father's own handwriting. In order to keep the matter quiet he had drawn out his own will."

"I remember your saying so."

"It was a good thing for us that the will never turned up, but I was thinking over the matter to-night, and a supposititious case came up in my mind, a case which I was puzzled to decide and I determined to submit it to you."

"Well, I will do the best I can with it."

"Supposing now that at the time of our father's death this will, which I once saw, and so know about it, was in existence, and was stolen by a certain party who thought he saw a chance to make some money by so doing."

A look of astonishment appeared on the face of the girl as she listened to this—to her—astounding supposition.

"Now the man comes to me and says, in substance: 'I have this will; if I make it public you will lose your fortune and be reduced to a narrow income. Give me so much money and I will give you the will; you can destroy it as soon as you please, and no one will be the wiser.'"

"What a wretch!" Rosalind exclaimed, indignantly.

"Well, what would you say to a proposition of that kind?"

"I would not have anything to do with such a man!" the girl declared, immediately. "I should consider myself to be guilty of a dreadful crime to even think of committing such a sinful act!"

"It might be urged, you know, that it isn't really a crime, for no one is wronged," Maurice argued. "The money is left to our grandchildren, and we leave the money to our children and they will transmit it to theirs, so the same result is accomplished."

"Yes, but that is not the way that father wanted it, and as it was his money surely he ought to have the right to say what should be done with it."

"Yes, still most men would argue the case as I have, and decide that they were not doing very wrong if they suppressed the document."

"I would not do such a thing for the world!" Rosalind declared, spiritedly. "And all the arguments of this kind would not convince me that it would be right to go contrary to the wishes of our father."

"I guess you are right, Rosalind," the young man remarked, a little confused. "Of course you understand that I was merely supposing a case. The will is not in existence, and we have no cause to trouble our heads about the matter."

"You think that you are extremely cunning, don't you?" cried an indignant voice, and Mignon Lawrence strode into the apartment with the air of a tragedy queen.

She was attired in a loose wrapper and her hair was in a dreadful state.

"Now don't you look at me, young man, for I am not presentable at all!" she continued.

"I did not intend to allow you to see me, but I had to take a part in this discussion."

"Rosy dear, you must really forgive me for talking to your big brother in this way, but now I am going to let the cat out of the bag!" she exclaimed, turning to the astonished girl.

"This brother of yours has been talking soft nonsense to me ever since I came in the house; despite the fact that I was nothing but a waiting-maid—that was before you elevated me to the position of your companion and friend."

"I will do him the justice to say that his attentions seemed to be strictly honorable and he always behaved himself like a gentleman."

"I suppose that it has been a mystery to him why a rich man like himself should not make a favorable impression upon a poor girl such as I am."

"I never took the trouble to explain the matter to him, but now I will do so."

"I always put him off, laughed at him when he attempted to make love to me, and acted as if I did not believe that he was in earnest, although I knew he was all the time."

"I will not say that I am free to accept the attentions of any man, because that is my business and I am not obliged to tell it to the whole

world. So long as I do not accept attentions no one has any right to ask me whether I am at liberty to do so or not.

"But now, in the frankest manner possible, I will tell you, Maurice Englebert, why I would not be your wife even if I loved you with all my heart and soul!" the girl exclaimed with flashing eyes, while the young millionaire fairly cowed before her, Rosalind looking on in profound astonishment.

"Of course, I do not doubt that it seemed strange to you that a penniless girl should adopt such an independent tone when the suitor is a young gentleman with millions of money.

"I am not one of the kind though to be bought like a slave for cash. I want a man and not a money-bag, and it is your lack of manhood, Maurice Englebert, which would make one decline your attentions even though I did like you ever so much!"

"Oh, come now, Mignon, don't be so deuced hard on a fellow!" the young man protested. "I am sure I have always treated you well!"

"Yes, yes! I have no reason to complain, but you do not treat yourself well," the young actress retorted.

"Now, I am just going to expose you, for you need the lesson, and I think it will do you good," she continued in a merciless way. "Rosalind, your brother has drank more wine to-night than is good for him and the result is that he has tried a cunning trick on you. You are too innocent and unaccustomed to that sort of thing to see what he is up to, but I understand his game just as well as though I had planned it myself.

"He has been telling you about about a supposititious case, but it isn't any such thing. It is the truth! Some one has got possession of this will and has offered to sell it to him, and he has so little manhood that he is thinking seriously of yielding to the demands of this unknown scoundrel."

"Very few men would resist the temptation," he pleaded.

It was a strange fact that he was never sulky or surly with the young actress.

In some mysterious way she had acquired a vast influence over him, although she had never tried to accomplish such a result.

"If they were good, honest men they would resist it!" Mignon declared firmly.

"And then can't you see, you poor, silly boy, that by yielding to the demands of this unknown scoundrel, you are placing yourself in the power of a man who will use his knowledge to extort blackmail from you for all the rest of your life?" And there was a fine touch of scorn in the actress's voice as she spoke.

"Well, no, I don't exactly see how you make that out."

"What price does the man demand?"

"Fifty thousand dollars," Maurice replied, somehow feeling as if he had to answer.

"Well, that is a nice sum to start on, I must say!" Mignon declared in amazement.

"You really must excuse me for saying it but, Maurice, you are more simple than I took you to be to entertain for a moment the idea of giving such a sum.

"And now make a clean breast of it, tell the whole story since you have started."

The young man obeyed and the two girls listened, attentively.

"This fellow is playing a bold game but I don't think he will win for all that!" Mignon announced.

"Now, Maurice, can't you see how completely you would put yourself in the power of this man if you should comply with his demands?"

"Well, no, I don't see that."

"Here are two of them that know of the existence of the will and can bear witness that you bought it.

"I assume that you are not going to be guilty enough to destroy the will, but only mean to suppress it, then, every time this precious pair wanted money they would come to you and threaten to tell of the bargain that you had made with them unless their demands were complied with."

"Yes, but they would put themselves in a hole for they would have to account for having the will in their possession," Maurice argued.

"Why what a rope of sand that is for a man to cling to!" the young actress declared.

"Can you prove that the will was stolen? Of course not! And that is the only charge which could be brought against them.

"Could they not hatch up a story about finding the will, and how could any one prove that the story was not true?"

"I believe you are right," the young man observed, slowly.

"I know that I am right!" Mignon declared. "You would not only commit a crime but put yourself in the power of a pair of unscrupulous villains."

"You are right, no doubt about it, and I have acted like an idiot."

"Well, you have not blundered very badly, so far," was the comforting assurance of the plain-spoken girl.

"And you may thank your lucky stars for having put this luminous idea of ascertaining by a subterfuge your sister's views into your

head, for if you had not, I wouldn't have known anything about the matter, and so could not have helped you out of the scrape."

Both brother and sister looked amazed at this statement.

"Is it possible that you can do anything in this matter?" Maurice asked.

"Possible it is!" Mignon replied, decidedly.

"Young man, there is a guardian angel watching over you, and a blessed good thing it is too, for I don't know what would become of you if it wasn't for the fact.

"Oh, you need not look at me as if you thought I was the angel, for I am not," the young actress declared. "I have not the brains to play such a role!"

"You must mean this detective, Joe Phenix!" Maurice exclaimed, a sudden light breaking in upon him.

"Now how should I know anything about any detectives?" Mignon exclaimed with a charming assumption of ignorance.

"You are a very deep girl, Mignon, and it would take a very smart man indeed to tell what you do know."

"Much obliged for the compliment," and the young actress made a graceful courtesy.

"I do not feel at liberty to make much of an explanation, but this I will say, the party who is keeping watch and ward over you has anticipated the production of this will ever since your father's death, and the discovery was made that the envelope which contained the will was missing.

"I will admit that I am in communication with this party, and he gave me strict orders that the moment I heard anything about the will I was to send him word.

"Of course, I am not thoroughly posted about the affair, for the party is not in the habit of speaking in regard to his plans to any one, but my impression is that these rascals have committed a fatal error by going into this will business and can be trapped."

"I sincerely hope so," Maurice replied. "I suppose I was contemplating a rascally act, and I must own up that I am very weak and foolish at times." And the young man made the confession in a rueful way.

"The fact is, Mignon, I need just such a wife as you would make to be at my side all the time so as to keep me in the right path, and I think you ought to take mercy on me; don't you, Rosy?" and Maurice looked in an appealing way at his sister.

"Yes, indeed!" the young heiress replied, promptly. "I would be very glad indeed if Mignon would make up her mind to become my sister in reality for then I could be sure that she would always stay with me!"

"Ah, yes, that is all very well, but you will be going off and getting married yourself some day, and then you will not be so anxious for my society," the young actress replied, archly.

"Nonsense!" Rosalind exclaimed, but she blushed a little at the retort.

"I can't give you any encouragement except to say that this is an uncertain world, and one never knows what will happen," Mignon remarked.

"But to come back to this affair. I will make a report the first thing to-morrow and then you will soon know what steps to take. But as I said before it is my belief that it is a most lucky thing I happened to come to a knowledge of this affair."

"Well, I hope so," Maurice said. "For I have no doubt that if I had been left to my own devices I should have gone on and made a perfect idiot of myself."

"Very likely!" the young actress observed.

"That is candid, if not complimentary!"

Then both the girls, laughed and Maurice retreated, feeling that he was no match for the sharp-tongued Mignon.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN ADVANCE IN FORCE.

"It will be necessary for me to go away for a little while," the young actress announced after Maurice departed.

Rosalind was distressed by this intelligence, but when Mignon explained that she had some important business to which attention must be given, the young heiress ceased her remonstrances, only asking that the other should return as speedily as possible, to which Mignon replied that she could depend upon that.

Early in the morning, before any one in the house was stirring, the young actress departed.

She went to a fourth-rate hotel in the neighborhood of Union Square which was conducted on the European plan, and noted as a resort for professional people, actors, singers and the like.

There she engaged a room, and sent a message to Joe Phenix.

In an hour the detective was with her, wearing his old man disguise.

He listened attentively to her story and when she finished observed:

"It was a lucky chance indeed which gave you an insight into this affair.

"It is just as you surmised; to use the vulgate,

the rascal has made a bad break, and now it is dollars to cents that I trap him!"

"Is there only one then?" Mignon asked in surprise.

"Only one principal, I think, although the fellow undoubtedly has confidants," the detective answered.

"Yes, I should imagine so, or else he could not carry out his plans."

"I know the party in the Englebert mansion who is acting for him," Joe Phenix remarked.

"You remember that when I rescued young Maurice from the toils of the schemer who led the young man on to rob his own father, my victory was not a complete one for I was not able to punish the scoundrel who put up the job on account of Maurice being implicated."

"Yes, I remember, and I recollect too that you said, when speaking of the matter, that it was only a question of time. That, sooner or later, you would get the ringleader in such a position that you would be able to catch him and in such a way that he could not escape punishment."

"Yes, and in order to entrap him I allowed one of his confederates to remain in the Englebert mansion."

"It was a mistake," and Joe Phenix shook his head in a sad way. "I can see that now, but I acted for the best."

"Perhaps if I had hunted that scoundrel out the chief villain would not have been able to have compassed the death of the old millionaire."

"Ah, but that was something that it was not possible for any one to foresee," the young actress observed.

"No, I did not give the Englishman credit for being such a thorough-paced villain, but I will nail him this time though, and you can depend upon it that I will not leave a loop-hole open for his escape!"

"Am I to try my hand with the woman?"

"Yes, and set about it as soon as possible. I will continue to see young Englebert and instruct him to proceed."

Then, after a few more words of small importance, the detective departed.

The actress repaired to the storage warehouse where she kept her trunks and ordered a certain one to be sent to the hotel.

When the trunk arrived she proceeded to assume a disguise, and when she finished she had so changed her appearance that it is doubtful if even the astute Joe Phenix would have been able to recognize her.

She was now a "washed-out, bleached blonde of the most pronounced English type, and by the aid of skillfully arranged pads she contrived to make herself look much larger than she really was.

There wasn't anything loud or coarse about her though, for she was dressed in dark colors and exhibited but little jewelry.

She knew that she would have to pass the inspection of the sharp-eyed lodging-house-keeper and so must be careful about her personal appearance.

When she called on Miss Jones to inquire in regard to a room she said she was a music-teacher and produced recommendations which Joe Phenix had provided for her.

She was too good an actress not to produce a good impression upon the guileless Miss Jones who, despite her years of experience as the keeper of a lodging-house, was really quite innocent and unsuspecting.

There was a room vacant which adjoined the one occupied by Mrs. Englebert; and as there was a door which connected the two apartments the spy saw that it would answered admirably, and so engaged it.

Then she told Miss Jones that she would go and give orders for the removal of her trunk.

An hour later trunk and woman were in the apartment.

Mrs. Englebert had caught sight of the new lady as the trunk was being carried in, and she took an early opportunity to question Miss Jones in regard to her, so she soon knew all the landlady did.

Mignon kept very quiet for a couple of hours and then, being sure that her neighbor was in her apartment, she began to sing airs from various comic operas, handling the music as only a burlesque actress would be apt to do.

Her idea was to excite the curiosity of the other.

Her plan was successful.

After a while there came a knock at the door which was between the two apartments, and Mrs. Englebert responded to the cheerful "come in!" of the other.

"Oh, my! I imagined that it was the landlady," Mignon declared. "I never thought of that door."

"I am your neighbor—Mrs. Englebert," the woman explained. "And I took the liberty of coming to ask if you had an envelope to spare."

"Certainly!" and Mignon ran to her trunk, unlocked it, and opened the lid, disclosing some very gaudy dressess.

"Oh, what pretty things!" Mrs. Englebert exclaimed with a significant laugh.

Mignon affected to be confused.

"Yes, a masquerade dress!" she remarked, then hastened to get out an envelope and shut down the trunk lid.

"Oh, yes, a masquerade dress!" and Mrs. Englebert laughed. "That would be very well for Miss Jones, for she doesn't know any better; but I do. I guess that you have been an actress, and that dress is a part of your wardrobe, eh?"

"Well, don't say anything about it, that's a dear! will you? You know some people have such a holy horror of actresses!"

"Yes, I am aware of that fact. Miss Jones said you were a music-teacher."

"That is the truth. I am giving music lessons now."

"But you have been on the stage?"

"Well, I suppose I will have to own up; but you will keep it quiet, won't you?" and Mignon assumed an imploring tone.

"Oh, yes, don't you worry about that. I know what it is to have a little secret of my own," the lady declared.

"But there, I never asked you to sit down." And Mignon pushed a rocking-chair toward the other. "I am so glad you came in, for I am such a lonesome creature. If you know anything about a stage life, you will understand that we professionals are very fond of having a good time, and don't like to be 'cooped up like nuns.'"

Mrs. Englebert had taken possession of the rocking-chair, and proceeded to make herself at home.

"Oh, I have been on the boards myself," Mrs. Englebert remarked. "So you cannot tell me anything about the life behind the footlights. And I confess I would dearly like to get back there, too. This kind of life that I am leading now is horrid dull."

"Ah, yes, I wish I could go to acting again," and Mignon heaved a deep sigh.

"Well, why don't you? I should think it would pay you much better than teaching music."

"There are reasons why I have to keep a little shady for a while. I am from England, and there are some people there who would dearly like to make trouble for me if they could."

"You see, dear, I got into a little scrape. A gentleman paid me attentions and presented me with some valuable jewelry, and then his people got after him and kicked up such a horrid row that the mean fellow declared that he had never given me the jewels—they were his mother's, you know—and said that I had got them away from him when he was under the influence of liquor."

"They didn't want to bring the case into court on account of the man's family, but the detectives got after me and made things so unpleasant that I just cut and run."

"I am a Londoner myself."

"Well, I am an American born, but I have spent a lot of time in England."

"And you got away with the jewels after all?" Mrs. Englebert inquired, very much interested in the story.

"Oh, yes, I will show them to you. I had to give up some, but I managed to hold on to about a hundred pounds' worth."

And then Mignon opened her trunk and hunted out her jewel-case.

The stones were fine diamonds, and Mrs. Englebert, who declared that she was a good judge of such matters, expressed much admiration.

In getting at the jewel-box a good-sized flask was exposed, and Mrs. Englebert remarked in a joking way that her companion had a strange kind of a cologne-bottle.

Mignon laughed and replied:

"Oh, well, I think you can imagine easily enough what kind of cologne I carry in that flask! I have lived long enough in England to get used to brandy and water, and I always carry a supply of good brandy with me."

"Will you have a little taste?"

"Well, I don't mind a few drops, though I seldom drink any spirits," Mrs. Englebert replied, but there was a sparkle in her eyes that belied her words.

The brandy was duly sampled, and Mrs. Englebert's few drops consisted of a drink big enough to satisfy anybody but an inveterate toper.

There was a gleam of satisfaction in Mignon's eyes as she smiled upon her new-made friend.

She believed she had discovered the weak point of the other.

The production of the flask was no accident. The young actress had met many Englishwomen in the course of her career and about all of them who were inclined to be fast were more or less addicted to drink, so she had laid a trap for Mrs. Englebert, and succeeded in catching her without any difficulty.

This was the beginning of the acquaintanceship between the two, and Mignon played her part so well that within a week she had managed to ascertain many important facts.

Each night before they went to bed the two paid their respects to the brandy flask, which Mignon took care to keep well filled with the best liquor that money could buy.

Mignon drank sparingly, but the other increased her potations from night to night until at last she got so that she became decidedly un-

der the influence of the liquor before she retired, and while in that state she had but little control over her tongue.

Joe Phenix was kept duly advised of the progress made by Mignon, and at the end of the week, by his orders, Mrs. Englebert was decoyed to his room in the tenement-house, under pretense that Mignon was going there to see a comic opera manager who thought of engaging her.

Joe Phenix assumed the role of the manager. He had refreshments provided for the ladies, including wine and brandy, and in the course of an hour Mrs. Englebert got in such a condition that it was an easy matter for the detective to convey her to his sub-cellar prison, which, however, had been provided with a little more furniture for the accommodation of the woman than it had held when the English ruffian occupied it.

Leaving Mignon to guard the captive, Joe Phenix, accompanied by Tony Western, sped away on another mission.

Slowly, little by little, the great detective was drawing together the threads of the snare which he had spread to catch the prey he sought, and to his notion success was now only a question of time.

CHAPTER XXXII. ENTRAPPED.

YOUNG Englebert had put a personal in the newspaper spoken of by the promoter, expressing his willingness to negotiate.

And that night Mr. Brown made his appearance at the Englebert mansion, and was duly ushered into the library, where Maurice sat.

"You have concluded to come to an arrangement, I presume," Mr. Brown remarked in his soft and oily way.

"Yes, I think so."

"I am glad of it!" the promoter declared as he sunk into the chair to which young Englebert had waved his hand.

"Of course, before I pay out any money I should like to satisfy myself that this document is really what it is represented to be."

"Certainly, of course! Very natural under the circumstances! I had an idea that you might like to see the paper and so brought it with me."

Then from his breast pocket Mr. Brown produced a large envelope, and Maurice could plainly see that there was an inscription on it in his father's handwriting.

From the envelope the promoter took a legal-looking paper, but before he had a chance to open it, Joe Phenix, who had been concealed in a closet in the rear of where Mr. Brown sat, advanced noiselessly into the room, and wrenched the paper from the hands of the other.

"This trick is mine, I think!" the detective cried.

"Am I to be robbed?" cried the promoter, wheeling suddenly around, drawing a revolver as he did so, but he had no chance to use the weapon, for Tony Western, who had been concealed behind a screen at the end of the room, sprung forward and passing his hands through the arms of the other held him helpless.

"The game is ended and you are trapped at last, Dandy Charmer!" Joe Phenix cried.

"This is an outrage! What do you mean?" exclaimed the prisoner, very pale.

"The end has come, and though you escaped me the first time, you will not be so lucky on this occasion," the detective said.

And then he stepped forward and removed the iron-gray wig which "Mr. Brown" wore, revealing the blonde hair of George Rochester.

"Quite a transformation!" the detective remarked, grimly.

"And when the bleach fades from your hair, and it assumes its natural hue, and the dye vanishes from your face, I fancy that you will look a deal more like Lysander Somerdyke than you do now."

"You will have difficulty, I think, to prove anything against me," the prisoner cried, with an angry sneer.

"I think not!" Joe Phenix replied. I have nabbed two of your confederates, Cuddlewick, the butler here, and this false Mrs. Englebert, and both of them have made a clean breast of it, so I know that it was you who personated Abraham Englebert and married the woman, and through the evidence of the butler I think I can bring the death of Abraham Englebert home to you. You made a fatal mistake when you tried this will business, for I was with Mr. Englebert when he burnt the document, and put a blank sheet of paper in the envelope so as to hold a check on his son. When I discovered after the death of Englebert that the envelope had been taken I reckoned what your game would be."

Somerdyke saw that the game was up and said nothing. He cheated justice though by taking poison before his trial.

Mignon pleaded for the false Mrs. Englebert, who as the lawful wife of the scheming Englishman but obeyed his command, and she was allowed to escape.

Our tale is told.

The wonderful plot had failed, thanks to Joe Phenix's Combine.

THE END.

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